

Hollywood **SPECTATOR**

20 CENTS

Every Other Week

Edited by WELFORD BEATON

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Ten To One . . .

Among the Spectator's paid subscribers are more schools, colleges and libraries than any other film publication in the United States can show, and more than ten times the combined such circulation of all the other film papers published in Hollywood.



No Cuts



From the EDITOR'S EASY CHAIR

Sunday Afternoon And An Actor

OUR Sunday afternoon guests were one of the really great screen actors and his wife. He came to pictures from the stage upon which he had been a brilliant success, and has made himself notable among those appearing on the screen. He is a delightful companion, has an engaging personality and a lazy-drawlish way of talking that is part of it. His pictures are cinematic events; his performances always are awarded the praise of critics. While we sat in the shade of a locust tree, smoking our pipes and engaging in desultory conversation, we ultimately, of course—as is the way in Hollywood—got around to motion pictures.

"I've been waitin'," he said, with the delightful disregard for the final "g" which makes his drawl so musical, "to tell you you're all wet when you say the screen's not an actin' art and that it has nothin' to learn from the stage."

While he rambled on and I occasionally put in my bit of contrary argument, the thought came to me that if he could give as perfect a screen performance in a picture as he was giving on my lawn, he would be much nearer than he is to the top of the film box-office list.

His Greatest Performance

¶ My friend is one of those whose bank account is fattened by Hollywood, but whose heart belongs to Broadway. I charge him with it and he amiably agrees with me. He—as I have said—is recognized as a great screen actor, yet on the box-office list his name is far below those of Shirley Temple, Mickey Rooney, Jane Withers and many more who never saw the up-stage side of theatre footlights. And the reason is that each of them gives on the screen exactly the kind of performance my friend was giving on my lawn and never gives on the screen. On the lawn he was completely natural. On the screen he is a stage actor.

His stage diction, which he brings to the screen together with the gestures and grace of movement the stage has taught him, has careful regard for every "g" and precise enunciation of every syllable. Such stage technique, however, was not developed to make stage dialogue pleasant to listen to. The reason was a more practical one: to make it possible for the audience to hear stage dialogue.

Master of Stage Technique

¶ If my friend had dropped his "g's" on the stage as he did on my lawn, if he had spoken on the stage in the same lazy drawl, only the people in a few front rows could have understood what he was saying. It was the necessity for projecting the voice which made precise enunciation an essential element of stage technique, enunciation which is the hall-mark of the actor. It is my friend's mastery of the art of the stage which makes his fans so loyal to him, but Shirley Temple, Mickey Rooney and Jane Withers have individual armies of fans, each of which greatly outnumbers the famous actor's.

The famous actor expresses on the screen his mastery of the technique he learned on the stage. There he

learned how to project sorrow to his audience, to make his audience believe he really felt it, and the audience was too far from him to see if it were reflected in his eyes, the windows through which we see inward emotions. When Shirley Temple feels sorrow, she **feels** it and lets the camera make us aware of it.

Love and Admiration

¶ We know Shirley and Jane and Mickey. The public does not know the famous actor. I have discussed him too frankly to tell you who he is, but if any of his fans who admire him as an artist had seen him rolling on our lawn, wrestling with my delighted Spaniel, they probably would have concluded that he was drunk; his actions being so foreign to the impression he conveys on the screen, no other conclusion would seem reasonable. The public loves Shirley. It admires my friend. And figures show that love has greater box-office value than admiration.

Yet a heading in the Examiner this morning reads, "Metro Seeking Orson Welles for Role of Dictator Windrip." And only yesterday the same paper told us that Metro's chief executives were concerned greatly over dwindling box-office receipts. No doubt a picture in which Welles appears would be a great artistic success, but it still would be up to Mickey Rooney to bring home the bacon. Metro is catering to a motion picture market, and a photograph of stage technique is not a motion picture.

* * *

Why Not Experiment?

WE WERE told in a recent radio broadcast how many millions of dollars automobile manufacturers spent in experiments to develop an unbreakable glass. Another broadcast told of the enormous sums spent by General Electric in efforts to increase the efficiency of its lamps. All industrial progress has been the product of long and expensive experimentation. The film industry is the only one in the country which does not make experiments. It originated neither the sound device nor the improvements which have brought it to its present stage of perfection. Its cameras and its lighting equipment are products of concerns outside the industry. The prevailing lassitude of film box-offices would seem to point to the present as a time when it would be wise for the industry to risk a little money in making an experiment which possibly would result in restoring vigor to box-offices. Any student of the screen knows it is an art form which, if it is to be true to itself, must express itself in visual terms. Any student of the art knows the industry's customers will be satisfied with less than perfection, that it will accept the alien element of spoken lines to expedite the telling of the stories it pays to see. The same student will tell you prevailing unsatisfactory box-office conditions are due to the overdose of dialogue the public is getting.

Make Real Motion Picture

¶ What seems the wise thing for the film industry to do now is to spend a little money in making an experiment. I know it will terrify the bravest producer to suggest he should make a real motion picture and try it on the public, but that is precisely what I suggest. The only idea

developed within the industry to stimulate box-office receipts—the movie quizz contest—having proved a magnificent bust, it might be wise for it to accept a suggestion from the outside. If one producing organization is not brave enough to try the suggestion the Spectator advances, no doubt all the others could be persuaded to chip in until the production kitty became big enough to bear the cost of making just one picture that would be as true as is practical to its art medium, which would say more with its camera and less with the microphone, and in a large measure restore to the film theatre the peace and quiet which built the foundation upon which the entire industry now rests. The two billion dollars which rests on the foundation could be made secure by underpinning it with the kind of product the industry will make when it acquires knowledge of the nature of the business it is supposed to be in.

* * *

Can Do Nothing About It

WHILE the Spectator has no apologies to make for any opinion it expresses and will stand staunchly behind any statement it makes, it can go no farther than that in assuming responsibility for the effect of its utterances. I am impelled to make such statement because of the alarming possibilities suggested by a message the mailman brings me in the handwriting of an Oakland, California, subscriber, Barbara L. Bowman. It says, "The Spectator has just arrived, and as usual I am reading it instead of washing the breakfast dishes." If the writer is a Miss, living alone, there is no menace for the Spectator personnel in her neglect of her household duties, but if married, and perhaps to a fussy husband who can derive no esthetic pleasure from gazing on a pile of unwashed dishes, I wish to assure him the situation is one he will have to handle himself without dragging the Spectator into it. This paper regards itself as a crusader in a noble cause, and it cannot be swerved from its purpose by thoughts of egg stains hardening and marmalade congealing on dishes which need washing.

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Fame That Jack Built

METRO has made a discovery. It has put Jack Mulhall under contract. A decade ago Jack was a reigning favorite. He never lost the quality which made him popular, but got trampled underfoot in the screen's mad rush for stage talent when pictures began to talk, a folly for which it now is paying in the form of constantly lessening box-office receipts. There are other Jack Mulhalls scattered through Hollywood, half of them women, and it would pay all the studios to do some discovering.

* * *

Ray Golden Wanted to See It

ARARE theatrical treat was provided when Ray Golden and Everett Weil presented "Our Town" at Biltmore Theatre. It was daring of Thornton Wilder to take such a revolutionary step in dramatic writing, and much to the credit of Jed Harris to give it a New York production. How the play happened to get a Los Angeles showing is an interesting story. When Jed Harris was out here recently, Ray Golden urged the New York producer to send us the play, if for no other reason than that he, Ray, wanted to see it and did not have time to go to New York. "Well," said Jed, "bring it out yourself and have a look at it." And that is what Ray did. "Our Town" is one greatly human document I hope no picture producer will bring to the screen. The fine fabric which Wilder fashioned would have to be tortured to meet the demands of the camera for visual attractiveness. It is a play which belongs solely to the stage. However, it introduces to us in Martha Scott a talented and beautiful girl with great screen possibilities. And it reminds us that we would

like to see more frequent appearances in pictures of Frank Craven and Ann Shoemaker, both of whom give superlative performances in the play.

* * *

To Tell Secret of Getting In

SEEMS the public is becoming conscious that the film industry offers careers in something besides acting. The Spectator always had had plenty of mail asking it how the writers can get a chance to start acting careers, but for the last year it has received a steadily increasing number of requests for information about other openings. Some women have asked how they can get work in studios as designers of gowns for the stars, and one San Francisco woman asks how she can get started on a career as a film editor. We have heard from men who want to be art directors, cameramen, assistant directors, sound recorders, casting directors, still photographers, but, of course, most of those who write us want to direct pictures. It has been our practice to answer personally all such inquiries. But we have thought of a new plan. We do not know what one should do to get a job in pictures, but we can tell our readers how others got started, and that is what we intend to do. Our chunky Robert Watson is buzzing around interviewing people who now have jobs, directors, writers, technicians, cameramen. One man, for instance, owes a good job in pictures to

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the fact that in Texas at one time he slept with a cobra to keep it warm. I think he is the only one who got in that way. However, beginning in the next Spectator we will publish a series of How-I-Got-Ins which should be interesting.

Less Talk, More News

RADIO broadcasting could do with a little more showmanship. My pet peeve now is the manner in which news is broadcast. Walter Winchell is the only one who seems to know how a radio commentator should operate. He gets the greatest possible number of news items into the time allowed him, consequently he has the greatest audience. He skims over the news, recently including twenty-seven items in his broadcast. I checked one of Pat Bishop's turns on the air. In a longer net time than is giving us the full names and titles of law officers who accorded Winchell, Pat presented eight news items, in one instance carrying his love for detail to the extent of giving an uninteresting criminal in an eastern city. All the other local news commentators have the same weakness. That is why Walter Winchell comes as a relief on Sunday nights.

* * *

La Hepburn a Hit

OUR little Katy Hepburn has made the East sit up and take notice. She was not an outstanding success on the screen, but each of her appearances made one feel she had the stuff it takes and would be a success if only she could overcome whatever it was that was barring her progress. Her career on the stage was much the same, criticisms of her performances being more adverse than favorable. But at last she has made a real hit and no doubt before long will be back in Hollywood again. I quote from Stage, the excellent New York magazine which for years had been a monthly and now appears twice a month:

"To Miss Hepburn the theatre should give the special wreath of absolution that it reserves for actors who redeem themselves nobly. There is nothing, in fact, that could be said against her performance in 'The Philadelphia Story.' It is extremely sincere and fresh and lovely. It has none of the monotony and none of the equine mannerisms that have annoyed her detractors. Of course she still speaks with her particular brand of

Bryn Mawr Cockney, but it is both charming and appropriate. Costumed by Valentina in all manner of brilliant and flowing elegance, she is lithe and very desirable. And it should be evident—if it hasn't been evident before—that she has a fine, beautiful face for the theatre; a strong face, quite unlike any other, which can hold its own against the footlights."

Less Hopping About, Please

WHEN dialogue is carrying the story, there should be as little visual distraction as possible. Nearly all our directors confuse physical and filmic motion. It is the latter, not the former, which is the life-blood of a screen creation. When two characters are reading lines which carry the story, the majority of directors think they are infusing action in the scene by having their players move about the room, sit for a moment in a chair, change to another. Such movement in reality impedes action by diverting audience attention from what the characters are saying to what they are doing. The only excuse for such dialogue passages is the fact of their carrying the story, that through them runs the filmic motion which always should preserve an unbroken thread from the first fade-in to the final fade-out. Hollywood's greatest need is a school to teach producers, writers and directors the fundamental principles of the medium in which they work. No director who knows what filmic motion is, would permit one of his players to bob up and down when delivering a speech which should engage the full attention of the audience. And no one in the audience would notice the lack of physical action or consider the scene flat when his mind was on the import of the speech.

Getting Too Much of It

OVERINDULGENCE in a good thing is an established picture producer habit. At present the screen is resorting too frequently to "double take" technique, that of a character taking some time to get the import of a speech or a situation. It is good comedy technique, but, like everything else, it can be overdone.

Where to Look for It

A HOLLYWOOD despatch in variety (New York) opens with this paragraph: "Talent for Hollywood is where you find it. This is the consensus of talent scouts, casting directors, producers, and executives on the various lots. Recapitulation on new talent for the past year shows that around 75% of the players are brought here from the professional stage; 20% from little theatres (which, of course, means also the stage); and the remainder from radio and other sources." When all other fields are exhausted, perhaps talent scouts, casting directors, producers and executives will stand outside the doors of their casting departments and pick their new talent out of the parade of extras coming out after being told there is nothing doing.

No Use Rubbing It In

ONE of the funny arguments advanced in defense of so much dialogue in current pictures, is that the public has been taught to expect talk. It also has been taught to expect whooping cough, hurricanes and gangsters, but would be better off if it could get less of them.

Goes a Bit Too Far

ONE of Jimmie Fidler's recent columns takes screen players to task for avoiding the autograph seekers who make such nuisances of themselves as preview audiences are filing out of film theatres. He cites the instance of "two of the industry's top stars," who, "five minutes before the screening was finished, started to fidget. With

the final clench, they slipped furtively from their seats, darted for a side exit, made a bee-line for their car." Obviously Jimmie thinks they should have gone out the main entrance to be rushed by an unruly mob, pushed, clawed, have their clothes torn—not by real picture fans, but by audacious youngsters who seek autographs for the purpose of selling them. I once walked out of a preview house with Barbara Stanwyck and Bob Taylor, and what happened to them quite convinced me they would be justified in arming themselves with clubs when setting out for another preview. Of course, a writer who must turn out a column every day can be excused for occasionally writing rot, but in this instance Jimmie puts quite a strain on the privilege.

Mental Meanderings

MATTER of major importance at the moment is the flower garden. I am really excited about it. Everything is coming along in the most extraordinary manner, better than in any previous year. That probably is due to the fact that we used fertilizer more generously than usual and prepared our beds farther in advance of the new planting. As I write this, fertilized pits are awaiting dahlia bulbs, some choice varieties, which will be in before this Spectator reaches you, and then every bed will be complete. We have an extraordinary display of blooming carnations, and the Golden Emblem rose, which stretches for thirty feet along the front fence, is a mass of yellow nuggets. But everywhere there is bloom, and I could go on and on, but I am afraid I would bore you. However, I use this column to register what I think about when I am off shift, so I will tell you that I think chiefly about the garden, so that's that. . . . But I must tell you about the spinach. Apparently the place once was a vegetable garden, for three clumps of spinach are emerging to maturity in it. I believe in the live-and-let-live theory, and as the guest clumps of spinach are close together, we have enclosed them in a circle of pansies, and Mrs. Spectator and I tend them carefully even though neither of us likes spinach. . . . Logical Hollywood marquee: Time Out for Murder, While New York Sleeps. . . . As the weather gets warmer, it takes me some time to get over the regret that wood fires are off the list until next fall. But we remained loyal to them as long as possible. We finally gave up when one made the living room so hot we had to sit outdoors. . . . I am having difficulty in filling my usual Meandering space this morning; notes on several exceedingly clever things to say have gone to the laundry in the pocket of the sport shirt I was wearing when I thought of them. I am writing in the garden; started early, before the sun grew warm; now it is hot and I am in it, and am determined to sit right here until I reach the bottom of the column, even if I broil. . . . Luckily I was saved from broiling by the opportune arrival of Billy in distress. Billy is one of my best friends among those who live along our dirt road. He is four-going-on-five and has a wise old Scotch terrier friend and constant companion. When I was submitting myself to the broiling process, Billy and Jock came to a stop outside the fence upon which is draped the Golden Emblem display of gold and green. They gazed at the bloom, then Billy, spying me, poked his head through the fence and informed me that his mother liked roses. Since then I have been cutting a big bunch, so big, in fact, that Billy could not manage it, so he and I and Jock and my Spaniel and Mrs. Spectator's Pekinese toddled down the road to Billy's house, and while his mother and I sat on the porch and talked of gardens, Billy played with the dogs until they got excited and started to fight, at which time I departed with our two. And now I am back on my garden chair which sits in the sun—and here is the end of the column.

Motion Picture Appreciation

BY
THE EDITOR

WE WILL call the class to order and start off the morning with a quarrel, but a nice, friendly one. At the end of my review of the latest Deanna Durbin picture in the *Spectator* of April 1, I made for motion picture appreciation students some comments on the screen technique involved in establishing some story points. Gladys Christensen, a teacher in the Roosevelt Junior High School, San Francisco, writes me as follows: "Your suggestion at the end of the Deanna Durbin review is good. However, to extend it further than that is of doubtful value at the present writing. The technique of the making of motion pictures would fit well for the junior college or college grade student. For the average high school or junior high school people, the *Spectator* is amply covering the field in which they are interested."

Another Teacher's Opinion

¶ It would be impracticable for the *Spectator* to conduct two motion picture appreciation departments, one for the junior college or college grade student, another for the junior high school or the high school student. I believe, however, that the technique involved in making motion pictures can be discussed entertainingly enough to interest both college and high school pupils. Sharing this view is Lelia Trolinger, Bureau of Visual Instruction, University of Colorado. Referring also to my remarks at the end of my review of Deanna's latest picture, remarks drawing the attention of study groups to a technical point, Miss Trolinger writes:

"By all means continue to add those comments. For those of us who attempt to teach classes which include units on motion picture appreciation, any evaluation of this sort is very helpful. There are not enough in the field doing or trying to do this sort of thing to cause any danger of duplication." And Miss Trolinger adds this flattering paragraph: "Without any intent of 'apple polishing' or throwing bouquets, I wish to say that I like your film reviews better than any that I read. Much of my own picture attendance is decided by your reviews and so far I have not been disappointed."

Knowledge Is Desirable

¶ As I view the whole question of discussing the screen from an educational standpoint, the purpose is not to prepare students or members of study groups to make pictures. Rather is it to prepare them to derive greater satisfaction from viewing them. The greater our knowledge of the fundamentals of a visual art, the greater must be the

On This Page

OWING to constantly increasing circulation of the *Spectator* among educational institutions which use it as an aid in the study of motion pictures, an effort will be made to present in each issue an analysis of the screen values of some important picture which lends itself to such treatment. Few pictures possess the qualities which give them values essential to their selection as subjects for study, but there may be enough to enable us to keep up the service without missing an issue. The subject of today's discussion is Republic's *Man of Conquest*, a picture which is a fine example of the intelligent use of talkie technique.

satisfaction we derive from viewing one of its creations. So my gentle quarrel with Miss Christensen is based on my conviction that the technicalities of picture making can be discussed in terms sufficiently elemental to interest high school students, and not too elemental for more advanced students and the adults who compose the many adult study groups.

To such groups and to educational institutions are available perhaps a score of booklets which analyze the stories of various pictures and suggest courses of study to promote better understanding of their historical or literary significance. I have before me one sponsored by the National Council of Teachers of English, an organization which takes active and intelligent interest in the screen as an educational factor. The booklet is termed, "A Guide to the Critical Appreciation of the Republic Photoplay Dealing With the Career of Sam Houston: *Man of Conquest*."

Pay to See Technique

¶ One who reads the booklet and follows its instructions as to co-related reading before seeing the picture, certainly will be well posted on the historical, social and biographical significance of the production; and if, after reading it, he can answer all the questions it asks, as well as to do the further reading it recommends, he probably will be exhausted to the point of his not desiring to see another picture of the sort for quite a long time. *Man of Conquest*, however, is an important picture, a stirring and valuable contribution to Americana. But how many of those who seek it as entertainment will undertake the course of study regarding it which is outlined in the booklet?

People who pay their way into film theatres are seeking motion pictures as entertainment, as a retreat from mental exercise, not an advance toward it. It really is motion picture technique they pay to see. If *Man of Conquest* were seen only by those who wish to study the history it teaches, it would not return to its makers one cent on one dollar of production cost. That makes it appear to me that the best approach to the desired end of having the public benefit by absorbing the educational values of a picture, is first to interest them in the picture as such, to point out to them its cinematic values, and permit the educational values to be a by-product of their attendance.

Some Man of Conquest Points

¶ The *Spectator's* conception of the meaning of "motion picture appreciation" as applied to school and college classes, is the appreciation of pictures as such and not as historical or social documents. Or perhaps I had better put it this way: The *Spectator* will leave it to study groups to continue their valuable work in connection with the subject matter of the stories which are told on the screen, and will confine itself to the manner in which the stories are told in the language of the medium which tells them.

We will take *Man of Conquest* as a picture which well repays study. From a technical standpoint it is as nearly perfect an example of the talkie form as the screen has given us since it got its tongue. In preparing the screen play, the writers revealed consciousness of the fact of the camera's being the screen's chief story-telling medium. In no place in the picture is a line of dialogue used to express something the camera could express in visual terms. What dialogue there is consists of short, crisp sentences except in scenes in which characters address audiences, and the speeches delivered in the few such scenes get their value largely from their contrast with the terse dialogue in all the other scenes.

Introduction of Characters

¶ When the main title fades out, there appears on the screen a statement setting forth the theme of the story the picture will tell. Thus is the mood set, and we are not taken out of it by the long list of credits and cast names which other pictures compel audiences to sit through. *Man of Conquest* gets right down to business by beginning the story and introducing the man, leaving the credits for the end of the picture to allow us to walk out on them if they do not interest us. In the opening sequence we get our first taste of the clever dia-

logue treatment which persists to the end. A woman addresses Sam Houston by name; he, in replying, calls her mother, thus in a few words are the two characters introduced and identified.

But it is necessary we should know something about the past of Sam Houston. Two or three exceedingly brief lines of dialogue acquaint us with the fact of his love for the outdoors. A line which illustrates how it is done: (Mother speaking) "And who gave up his job as a school teacher and went to live with the Indians?" Sam's grin proves he is the person. What a wealth of background story there is in a speech so short, and what a wealth of personality is expressed by the grin!

Speech As Story Device

¶ In another scene, a political speech by Andrew Jackson sketches the career of Houston from the time of his first appearance to his becoming governor of Tennessee; and a series of montage shots with superimposed dates teach us history of stirring times more vividly, and in a manner to remain longer in our minds, than any printed history or professor of history possibly could teach it. The point I wish to emphasize is the method of teaching, not what is taught. That is what I would ask study groups to notice when viewing the picture.

I could make a long list of points the student of film technique should not overlook. A few of them: The few speeches required to amplify the camera's presentation of the reasons for Sam Houston's bride's desertion of him; the spread of gossip which follows her leaving him, shown by sharp cutting from one short shot to another until the extent of it is established; almost sole reliance on the camera to put over the completeness and the duration of Houston's drunken debauch following his resignation as governor; the heroic stubbornness of the defenders of the Alamo registered by several cuts to the flag flying so bravely over it, each cut showing the flag still more riddled and torn, but each showing it still flying as a symbol of the determination of the handful of men to die, perhaps; to surrender, never.

Camera Tells the Romance

¶ Then there is the mysterious way in which the camera makes Gail Patrick's beauty and absorption in her role of the woman in love with Houston, come to our emotions with such sudden impact. This romance, the second in Houston's life, is left almost entirely to the camera to tell, what lines there are spoken serving more to round it out than to establish it. Notice how quietly the words of love are uttered. Notice also how understandingly are all the dialogue scenes directed. No voice is raised higher than the mood of the scene demands.

That is intelligent direction, worth noticing only because it is so rare.

In all the purely physical scenes in *Man of Conquest*, the same wise reliance on camera is displayed. An excellent example of intelligently propelled forward flow of story is presented in a sequence showing Richard Dix (Houston), Gail Patrick, her family, and a few score other people traveling from Tennessee to Texas. At this juncture of the story our interest lies in the progress of the Gail-Dix romance. Together they take seats on top of a stagecoach and start the romance which seems to glide along without interruption as their southward progress continues — from stage to steamer to train of covered wagons. The whole picture is as perfect an example of sustained filmic motion as it is possible for the talkie form to achieve.

Should Be Seen Twice

¶ Not by seeing the picture only once can the student get all its cinematic values. It is too engrossing as entertainment to permit the mind to become analytical when viewing it for the first time. For the purpose of this analysis I saw it twice, the first time to estimate its values as popular entertainment. I considered it excellent entertainment and so expressed myself in the last *Spectator*. I saw it the second time to discover why I liked it so well the first time, and found in it most of the cinematic virtues I enumerate here, the others being those which forced their way into my consciousness at the first viewing.

We must not lose sight of the fact that motion pictures are not made for study groups to take apart in an effort to find out why they tick. They are made for the sole purpose of entertaining audiences. If they are entertaining, nothing else matters greatly. But the student of screen entertainment always should know why he likes or why he dislikes a picture he sees. That cannot be determined until he has seen a picture for the second time. But I believe those who read this page prior to their seeing *Man of Conquest* can be conscious of the points I mention without lessening their absorption in the story as entertainment.

★ "It's what I've been preaching on this lot until I nearly preached myself out of my job. I have written sequences exactly to the pattern your book presents, only to have them sent back for more dialogue. That is what you get for working for people who don't know the kind of business they are in." — (Name omitted to keep the writer from getting in bad with his bosses.) *A Plea and A Play*, by Welford Beaton; price one dollar. *Hollywood Spectator*, 6513 Hollywood Boulevard, Hollywood.

Harry M. Warner Expresses Thanks

DEAR Welford:

I want you to know that I deeply appreciate the magnificent attention you pay *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* in the current issue of your publication.

In focusing interest of your readers upon a film of this type, you are rendering a service not only to them but to our nation, as well.

Under existing world conditions, we who love America must do all within our power to safeguard its ideals and to foster a greater love of country. We of the Warner studio have sought to accomplish this through the production of *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*. You, through your publication, are lending valuable aid.

With kindest personal regards, I remain, sincerely,

H. M. WARNER,
(President, Warner Bros. Pictures, Inc.)

Weep and Like It

There was an old actor
Who lived on beef stew,
Ran out of ingredients
And was stumped what to do.
He hoped for a phone call,
But it never came,
And he hadn't a nickel
To put to his name.
So rather than holler,
He went straight to bed.

When his landlady called
To collect her month's fare,
She hoped that the actor's
Food cupboard was bare.
"If only I'd known,
"I'd have helped him to thrive."
But the time to save actors
Is when they're alive.
And Jim, the old actor, was dead.
ROBERT WATSON.

★ People would seldom turn on their radios if the sound which issued from them were as loud and metallic of tone as that which issues much of the time from theatre loud-speakers. The sound reproduction in nearly all theatres could benefit by a modification of volume.

Eyes Examined and Glasses Fitted

DEVER D. GRAY, OPT. D.
... OPTOMETRIST ...

1725 North Highland Avenue
HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA
HEmpstead 8438

What Late Ones Look Like

Too Much Chatter for Easy Digestion

● **THE RETURN OF THE CISCO KID**; 20th-Fox production; directed by Herbert I. Leeds; associate producer, Kenneth Macgowan; screen play, Milton Sperling; based on character created by O. Henry; photography, Charles Clarke; art direction, Richard Day; associate art direction, Wiard B. Ihnen; film editor, James B. Clark; costumes, Gwen Wake-ling; musical direction, Cyril J. Mockridge. Stars Warner Baxter. Features Lynn Bari, Cesar Romero, Henry Hull, Kane Richmond, C. Henry Gordon and Robert Barrat. Supporting cast: Chris-Pin Martin, Adrian Morris, Soledad Jimenez, Harry Strang, Arthur Aylesworth, Paul Burns, Victor Kilian, Eddie Waller, Ruth Gillette, Ward Bond. Running time, 70 minutes.

NOTHING the matter with the Cisco Kid himself, but the vehicle in which he is brought back to us is such a poor thing it makes us wonder why Century did not let him stay dead. There is nothing the matter with Warner Baxter's repetition of the role. He is the same flashing, smiling daredevil we liked so well nearly a decade ago and who now is brought from the grave only to be knocked back into it by the story written for his resurrection. *The Return of the Cisco Kid* is not satisfactory screen entertainment chiefly because it talks too much. At least half the chatter is without story value and seems to be indulged in for its own sake.

An instance is the writing of the part played by that talented actor, Henry Hull. He is characterized as a drunken swindler who stops talking only when he is guzzling whiskey and whose part in motivating the story is much too trivial to justify the irritation he causes. He merely is the traveling companion of Lynn Bari, the leading woman, a part which could have contributed to the entertainment value of the picture if it had been written for a less blabby player, either male or female, and not written on the theory that there is comedy value in constant swilling of liquor.

Outstanding for Beauty

☞ Visually, the picture is a beautiful thing, Charles Clarke, its cameraman, being entitled to billing as its star. It brings to us the mood of the desert with long vistas of its grotesque loveliness, its peaks and plains, its lights and shadows, but too little of the cloak of silence which makes it so impressive. It is a setting which demanded for its complement the subdued sparse talking of men whose actions make their silence eloquent. But instead of what we should have had—a story which could be told completely without asking us to listen to more than two hundred speeches—

On This Page

THE last *Spectator* contained reviews of ten pictures; the three before it, going backwards, had 17, 16, 11 respectively. This *Spectator* has 8 reviews, one of them having been crowded out of the last issue and held over for this one. The review-content of a *Spectator* is something beyond our power to control; if the studios do not preview pictures, we cannot review them. Hollywood understands that, but possibly the *Spectator's* readers outside Hollywood may attribute the fluctuations in the number of reviews published in each issue to be due to the rise and fall of the energy of our reviewers. Quite a number of big and little pictures are nearing completion, and it is not likely any future *Spectator* will contain as few reviews as we present in this issue. Among the reviews the *Spectator* can promise to present in its next issue are those of *Juarez*, *Union Pacific*, *The Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, all important pictures.

we are given one which contains over two thousand, most of which are nothing but meaningless noise.

An example of gratuitous presentation of voice for its own sake: A fire breaks out and threatens the desert community's principal building. The men get buckets, fill them with water and try to drown the fire. The desert, I remind you, breeds silent men, tight-lipped men who battle with it for existence. There was chance for drama in the fight with the fire—the grim men of the desert doggedly, silently striving to conquer the flames. But that is not what we get. During the entire fire sequence the men are yelling at the tops of their voices and running in circles like a lot of astonished rabbits. I am not aware whether producer, writer or director is to blame for such ineptitude, but if it were divided into three parts, there would be a big helping for each of them.

Performances Are Capable

☞ Strangely enough, all the performances, as such, will give satisfaction even though you will not like the picture as a whole. Warner Baxter is as convincing as the Cisco Kid as he was when the part started him on the road to fame and fortune. It is unfortunate for him that the character was brought back in a picture poorly written and poorly directed. Lynn Bari and Kane Richmond make the most of a romance, and as a team of cheerful desperadoes Cesar Romero and Chris-Pin Martin give excel-

lent accounts of themselves. The veteran Robert Barrat contributes one of those discerning, convincing characterizations we have learned to expect from him. C. Henry Gordon, one of Hollywood's most capable actors, gives a brief part story value. Soledad Jimenez is another who capably adds her bit.

As is the case with all Century productions, this one reflects credit on all technicians who had a hand in its making. Sound recording by Arthur von Kirbach and Roger Heman is particularly commendable, and as much can be said for the film editing of James B. Clark. The Century art department provided sets which are responsible in a large part for both the creation and maintenance of the atmosphere of the period which the story deals with.

Constant talking probably will exhaust the patience of adult audiences, but the action should please the youngsters. Study groups should note the excess of dialogue which has no story value.

Mickey's Mugging Mars the Mirth

● **THE HARDYS RIDE HIGH**; MGM; director, George B. Seitz; musical score, David Snell; art director, Cedric Gibbons; associate art director, Eddie Imazu; set decorations, Edwin B. Willis; photography, Lester White; film editor, Ben Lewis. Cast: Lewis Stone, Mickey Rooney, Cecilia Parker, Fay Holden, Ann Rutherford, Sara Haden, Virginia Grey, Minor Watson, John King, John T. Murray, George Irving, Halliwell Hobbes, Aileen Pringle, Marsha Hunt, Donald Briggs, William Orr, Truman Bradley. Running time, 75 minutes.

WHILE *The Hardys Ride High* measures up all right with the best of the smaller pictures, it is the poorest of the Hardy series. The story suffers from a constitutional weakness; it gives the Hardys a two-million-dollar inheritance, and after a couple of days takes it away from them, thus getting nowhere in particular. But that is not the chief weakness of the picture as entertainment. Mickey Rooney spoils it with his mugging. It is by long odds the worst performance he has given in one of the series. Under the capable direction of George Seitz, the Hardy pictures made Rooney one of the screen's important actors, gave him fourth place in the list of money-making stars.

When it was announced that W. S. Van Dyke was to direct the Hardy picture to follow *Ride High*, some speculation was caused in film circles. *Daily Variety* explained the shift by stating that "one of the top players" was getting out of hand, that Lion Tamer Van Dyke was called in to tame him. The

only out-of-hand player in *Ride High* is Rooney, and he certainly can stand a lot of taming if the series is to continue. In most of his scenes he succeeds only in being ridiculous. The fault cannot lie in the direction, as it was Seitz who was responsible for the excellent performances Rooney gave in the pictures which established his reputation.

Story Is Not Convincing

¶ The *Ride High* story does not ring true. It takes the family out of the home-folks atmosphere which was its greatest strength. And it takes Judge Hardy out of character by giving him a moment when he is on the point of committing a crime to obtain money upon which he has no legal claim. He does not commit the crime, but it is to his discredit that he thought of it, and not at all to his credit that he did not go through with it. Honesty is something we take for granted, and no man can preen himself upon practicing it. In every picture in which Judge Hardy appears hereafter there will rise before him the ghost of the crime he almost committed.

Ride High, of course, is not a total loss. It has many scenes which ring true and others which are exceedingly funny. It is mounted somewhat more imposingly than others of the series, the Metro technical experts again proving themselves masters of their crafts. With the exception of Rooney's, all the performances are excellent. Lewis Stone, of course, is the same dependable and sincere artist, even the moment of weakness to which I object, being put over with skill. Fay Holden is again the model mother, and Sara Haden, the old-maid school teacher, here becomes a butterfly, and a most engaging one. Cecilia Parker and Ann Rutherford are as charming as ever. Minor Watson and George Irving have important roles. Among those who appear briefly, I spotted Marsha Hunt. There is a girl who could get somewhere if some producer would give her a chance.

Story somewhat more involved than previous ones of series, consequently has less juvenile appeal. Rooney's performance will disappoint his adult admirers.

★ *A Plea and A Play*, by Welford Beaton. A plea for less dialogue in screen entertainment and a screen play to demonstrate how it can be done. One of the first comments on it: "Thank you for giving us the clearest treatment of the dialogue nuisance yet presented. It has been included in the text-books for our motion picture appreciation class."—Price, one dollar. *Hollywood Spectator*, 6513 Hollywood Boulevard, Hollywood.

★ The *Spectator* has the widest circulation among educational groups of any film publication.

England Sends Us One of the Best

● **STOLEN LIFE**; Paramount release of an Orion production; produced and directed by Paul Czinner; adapted by Margaret Kennedy; from the novel by K. J. Benes. Stars Elisabeth Bergner and Michael Redgrave. Supporting cast: Wilfrid Lawson, Mabel Terry Lewis, Richard Ainley, Kenneth Buckley, Cyril Horrocks, O. B. Clarence, John Lloyd, Roy Russell, Oliver Johnston, H. Regus, Devina Craid, Dorothy Dewhurst, Fewlass Llewellyn, Paulette Preney, Ernest Ferney, Stella Arbenina, Kaye Seely, Pierre Jouvenet, Dorice Fordred, Cot O'Ordan, Annie Esmond, D. J. Williams, Clement McCallin, Gayenne Micheladze, Cyril Chamberlain. Running time, 90 minutes.

A RARE treat, this one, with one of the world's greatest actresses teamed with one of its most agreeable leading men; a human story, told with leisurely progression, as is the English way, and backgrounds differing refreshingly from those we are used to seeing. We get few pictures from abroad which match in excellence *Stolen Life*, consequently American audiences have not been taught to look for them; and, as a further consequence, I am afraid this one will not earn the patronage its merits entitle it to, although locally the discriminating patronage which Manager Bruce Fowler has developed for his Four Star Theatre should assure it a long run.

Stolen Life presents Elisabeth Bergner with an opportunity to give her greatest purely mental characterization. She plays a dual role as each of a pair of twins, one—the leading character—a thoughtful, earnest girl of high character; the other a vibrant, unscrupulous trifter with easily adjustable moral principles, who ruthlessly steals from her sister the man the latter loves, marries him, then falls in love with another.

Story a Simple One

¶ As must be the case with all really great photoplays, the story of *Stolen Life* is a simple one which could be told in a couple of reels. As told on the screen it holds our lively interest for seven or eight reels by the sheer force of the artistry put into it by the writer, director and players. In the dual capacity of producer and director, Paul Czinner acquits himself brilliantly. I cannot recall at the moment an American picture which was given more discerning direction, one which conveys a greater suggestion of intimacy, the quality which makes us feel we are a part of it, friends of the family, permitted to share the joys and sorrows of those composing it.

In each of the widely diversified phases of her characterization Miss Bergner is superb. And, thanks to her and to the director, we have a picture in which a player assumes two roles without making us hear the creaks of the cinematic

machinery as it turns out the story. We see and become acquainted with two separate and distinct characters, so individual does Miss Bergner make each of them.

Harmonious Acting Pattern

¶ It is all of a quarter of a century ago since I saw all the principal plays being presented in London theatres, but there lingers with me yet the memory of the evenness of all the performances, the harmonious acting pattern in which the small bits were of the same quality as the larger parts of the fabric. The best English pictures coming to us from time to time have the same quality. *Stolen Life* is no exception. Miss Bergner's co-star, Michael Redgrave, made an impression upon all those who saw him in *The Lady Vanishes*. In *Stolen Life* he again distinguishes himself, but every part, down to the smallest, leaves no room for criticism.

Technically, the picture is fully up to the best Hollywood standard. Sound recording is excellent, as it had to be in a picture in which there are no raised voices and in which several speeches are whispered. Photography also is of high standard.

Too fine of texture for any but discriminating audiences. To study groups it presents an opportunity to compare direction with the best given Hollywood pictures. An attraction for first class theatres in larger cities; not for small town houses.

Could Have Been a Whole Lot Better

● **CALLING DR. KILDARE**; MGM; director, Harold S. Bucquet; original, Max Brand; screen play, Harry Ruskin; musical score, David Snell; recording director, Douglas Shearer; art director, Cedric Gibbons; associate art director, Gabriel Scognamiglio; set decorations, Edwin B. Willis; photography, Alfred Gilks and Lester White; film editor, Robert J. Kern. Cast: Lew Ayres, Lionel Barrymore, Laraine Day, Nat Pendleton, Lana Turner, Samuel S. Hinds, Lynne Carver, Emma Dunn, Walter Kingsford, Alma Kruger, Bobs Watson, Harlan Briggs, Henry Hunter, Marie Blake, Phillip Terry, Roger Converse, Donald Barry, Reed Hadley, Nell Craig, George Offerman, Jr., Clinton Rosemond, Johnny Walsh. Running time, 86 minutes.

NOT having seen the first picture of the *Dr. Kildare* series, I am not in a position to compare it with this one; but as the first scored a success, it must have been better entertainment than this one, which is unpleasant even though most capably directed and satisfactorily acted by a well chosen cast. And, of course, it has one of Metro's complete and visually attractive productions. As I understand the series, its purpose is to keep us interested in the progress of a clever young doctor (Lew Ayres) whose career is being guided by an

amusingly irascible old one (Colonel Barrymore).

This story shows Ayres disregarding both the ethics of his profession and the provisions of criminal law by refusing to report to the police a gunshot wound he is called upon to treat. Without the slightest clue upon which to base his conviction, Ayres is satisfied that his patient is not the murderer the police are convinced he is. That is the reason for his failure to report the case.

Hero Assumes Too Much

¶ Just why Ayres assumes the law will not give the wounded man a square deal is not made clear at any stage of the story. He shows his disrespect for the honesty and ability of law officers by his refusal to put the case in their hands and his decision to solve the crime himself. Thus we have the spectacle of a young doctor, fresh from a country town and guileless enough to become the easy victim of a designing gold-digger in the person of an attractive girl, considering himself the only person who could stand between his chance patient and the latter's unjust execution for murder. If I had been in the patient's place, I would have preferred to have my case placed in the hands of officers trained in the art of solving crimes.

A basically absurd story cannot be made into satisfactory screen entertainment, no matter how good the direction and capable the acting. The *Kildare* series offers Metro an opportunity to contribute something worthwhile to the screen, something dignified, human and amusing, but the series will not live long if it is to drag in the cheap, smelly melodrama of which the public already is tired, and if it persists in having its inexperienced hero doing things we refuse to believe he could do.

Points on Credit Side

¶ On the credit side of *Calling Dr. Kildare* there are the already noted direction of Harold Bucquet and several excellent performances. The direction of dialogue is particularly noteworthy, there being none of the loud talking which has driven so many customers away from film box-offices. Speaking in natural tones permits the player to substitute expression for noise, which is another way of saying it permits him to give a natural performance. Lionel Barrymore, of course, is to be credited with another superb performance. Lew Ayres carries on in a manner which can keep the series going if the stories are better than this one. Nat Pendleton, Sam Hinds, Walter Kingsford and several others among the men do good work. Little Bobs Watson scores a decided hit.

We are presented with a brace of beautiful and capable girls in the persons of Loraine Day and Lana Turner,

each of whom responds to Bucquet's direction with an engaging characterization. Emma Dunn and Alma Kruger prove again their dependability in character roles.

Two cameras contributed the excellent photography, those of Alfred Gilks and Lester White. The highly important job of editing the film was in the capable hands of Bob Kern, and a good job he made of it.

Worth the time of study groups as a demonstration of things which should not be done. Will be criticized for its moral tone as it justifies the action of a citizen in concealing a man wanted on a criminal charge. Not for children. Students should note the sensible direction of dialogue. Exhibitors had better soft-pedal on advance promises.

One With Little to Recommend It

● **THE LADY'S FROM KENTUCKY;** Paramount; producer, Jeff Lazarus; director, Alexander Hall; assistant director, Joseph Lefert; photography, Theodor Sparkuhl; art directors, Hans Dreier and John Goodman; film editor, Harvey Johnston; interior decorations, A. E. Freudeman. Cast: George Raft, Ellen Drew, Hugh Herbert, Zazu Pitts, Louise Beavers, Lew Payton, Forrester Harvey, Harry Tyler, Edward J. Pawley, Gilbert Emery, Eugene Jackson, Jimmy Bristow. Running time, 75 minutes.

QUITE a collection of things not to do when making a motion picture. All things Jeff Lazarus, the picture's producer, should have known in advance. The story is a cheap, tawdry recital of a romance, with a race horse background, shared by a gambler with a low conception of sporting ethics, and a girl so reared and refined it is impossible for the audience to believe she would love the kind of man the gambler is. Perhaps lurking in the back of Rowland Brown's head there may have been some idea which would justify the story—or such an idea may have been in his original—but, if so, there is no evidence of it in Mike Boylan's screen play.

Merging the kind of character George Raft should play, with the kind apparently he wants to play, proves only that he is not a romantic actor. He has made a place for himself on the screen in parts which suited his personality and by sticking to them could extend even his already established popularity, but among the parts he should not play is the kind he plays in this picture. And the agreeable and promising Ellen Drew will have to make her next appearance in a better story if she is to make us forget this one. And Paramount will have to do something to appease Kentucky for the shock *The Lady's From Kentucky* will give it. Having one of its fairest daughters in love with a tin-horn

gambler with low sporting instincts, is a bit too much.

Direction Does Not Help

¶ The weakness of the story is accentuated by the direction given it by Al Hall. Granted he had pretty bad material to work with, he still might have given us a better picture if he had directed with greater appreciation of such values as the script contained. He surely could have induced Raft to put some expression in the reading of lines. And he could have given us a dining room scene not quite as absurd as the one we see. Three people are seated at a round table; all face the camera, seating which leaves two-thirds of the table without occupants. A fourth guest joins them, squeezes in with the three, and the four sit elbow-to-elbow in order to bring all their faces into the camera.

One thing to the credit of the picture is its giving that capable comedian, Hugh Herbert, a chance to be different. His is the best performance, one free from the mannerisms he for a long time has been trying to get away from, but which his directors demanded. Hall allows him to be different, and an excellent characterization is the result. Another asset of the picture is the presence in the cast of the clever and popular Zazu Pitts, who for too long a period has been absent from the screen. Visually the picture is attractive, the production being of high standard. Technically, too, there is nothing lacking, photography, film editing and sound recording being thoroughly competent.

Criminal's Mind Is Taken Apart

● **BLIND ALLEY;** Columbia picture and release; director, Charles Vidor; associate producer, Fred Kohlmar; screen play by Philip MacDonald, Michael Blankfort and Albert Duffy; based on play by James Warwick; photography, Lucien Ballard; film editor, Otto Meyer; sound recording, J. A. Goodrich; musical director, M. W. Stoloff; art director, Lionel Banks; montage effects, Donald W. Starling; gowns, Kallach. Features Chester Morris, Ralph Bellamy, Ann Dvorak. Supporting cast: Joan Perry, Melville Cooper, Rose Stradner, John Eldridge, Ann Doran, Marc Lawrence, Stanley Brown, Scotty Beckett, Milburn Stone, Marie Blake. Running time, 68 minutes.

Reviewed by Bert Harlen

QUITE different from any story I recall having seen in pictures before is that of *Blind Alley*. The whole affair is tied up with psychoanalysis, being an account of how a psychology professor uses the one weapon at his command to protect his family and guests when his home is invaded by a notorious killer and his accomplices, hiding from the police—the professor “destroys” the fellow by taking apart his mind and

showing him how it works. The process is grim but exciting.

Chester Morris gives a vital portrayal of the killer. It is a finely thought out, excellently accented and shaded performance, one of the best I have seen this season. Hard on his heels for honors is Ralph Bellamy, as the shrewd professor, calmly but alertly watching his chances to throw a noose of science about the killer. Ann Dvorak depicts a devoted gangster's moll with spirit, and Joan Perry, Melville Cooper, Rose Stradner, the youthful John Eldridge and others are able. Director Charles Vidor has brought an experienced hand to bear on the proceedings, carrying along the drama with intensity and pace.

New Science Explained

¶ The psychoanalysis tenets have been set forth with admirable clarity by the script. In fact, the picture constitutes a good exposition of the basic principles of the science. The psychoanalysts maintain, it may be recalled, that much of abnormal behavior is caused by memories which the individual would escape and has pushed down into the subconscious mind, and that once these memories are coaxed into the open and the individual made aware of the causes of his behavior, he is cured of the proclivities. In this story the criminal is not only cured of a nightmare which has haunted him from childhood, or so the professor assures him, but is also freed from his impulse to kill, though this metamorphosis, ironically, brings about his doom. I am not qualified to express an opinion on the merits of this branch of psychiatry. The important thing is that the theories are wholly acceptable during the unfoldment of the drama, which is doubtless due in large part to the craftsmanship in the screen play and to Bellamy's sincere playing. Those who are indifferent to a sprinkling of ideas in their film fare will find plenty of melodrama to absorb them.

Montage Sequences Weird

¶ Good dramaturgy can be seen in the structure of the screen play by Philip MacDonald, Michael Blankfort and Albert Duffy, though I judged the text of James Warwick's play was adhered to closely in important scenes of the drama. The convincing way in which the killer is brought around to subjecting himself to the psychiatrist's probing, is an instance of exceptionally good writing. Entrances and exits are deftly managed, too, and the tension is lightened by comedy touches at strategic places. The only place where pace and interest lag are in an early portion when two principle characters start talking about two other characters which have not yet entered the story and in whom we have no interest, something which should practically never be done in screen writing.

Though the script, for the most part, is wholly in the talkie genre, and most of the action is confined to a single set, good pace is maintained through the vitality of the performances and the animate use Vidor has made of the camera. Evidently the discerning editing of Otto Meyer had a hand in the movement, too.

Touches of sheer cinema, however, are provided by Donald W. Starling in his montage sequences. The recital of the killer's recurring dream is evidently effected through the use of the negative film. At any rate, it is an eerie effect. Depictions of the exhumed memories of the fellow are artfully realized also, what with distorted perspectives and the like. The general photography of Lucien Ballard contributes importantly to the film, as does the art direction of Lionel Banks and the musical score by Stolfoff.

A study in psychoanalysis, with a counterpoint of melodrama, which should catch the fancy of all adult picture-goers. Libraries might find a tie-up between the film and their books in the psychology field. Students will observe instances of good dramaturgy, some excellent playing, and some imaginative montage sequences. Not recommended for children, however.

Playing in This One Best Feature

● **SORORITY HOUSE**; RKO production and release; director, John Farrow; producer, Robert Sisk; production executive, Lee Marcus; screen play by Dalton Trumbo; based on story, "Chi House," by Mary Coyle Chase; photography, Nicholas Musuraca; art director, Van Nest Polglase; associate art director, Carroll Clark; musical score, Roy Webb; gowns, Edward Stevenson; sound recording, Earl A. Wolcott; film editor, Harry Marker. Features Anne Shirley and James Ellison. Supporting cast: Barbara Read, Adele Pearce, J. M. Kerrigan, Helen Wood, Doris Jordan, June Storey, Elisabeth Risdon, Margaret Armstrong, Selmer Jackson, Chill Wills. Running time, 60 minutes.

Reviewed by Bert Harlen

SOME high caliber playing reflecting sensitive direction, is the one attribute of *Sorority House*. Anne Shirley, Adele Pearce and Barbara Read give very well interpreted and emotionally keyed depictions of three college students sharing a room at a boarding house, the former two, freshmen, eagerly awaiting the prized bids which will invite them to become pledges of a sorority. Miss Read, a sophomore, is whimsically philosophical—most of the time—about not having been pledged as yet. J. M. Kerrigan backs them up with a human portrayal of the former girl's father. There are numerous scenes which are handled with excellent delicacy or dramatic verve by John Farrow—Miss Shirley's overflow-

ing capture upon finally being at college, quiet but fervent, as she talks to James Ellison in the moonlit garden in front of the boarding house; the hysterical attempt at suicide by one girl who fails to receive an expected bid.

The story itself, however, is not at all times convincing. In fact, it misses the spirit of campus life about as far as most films dealing with our universities. There is a good material for a yarn in the undue emphasis given sororities at most educational institutions. Granted, such cliques beget a certain amount of snobbishness, a somewhat distorted sense of values, and keen disappointment for some excluded students. Only, *Sorority House* pounces on the problem in the manner of *Man Mountain Dean*.

Some Decline to Join

¶ From the picture it would appear the average girl goes to a university principally to join an exclusive and expensive sorority and to find a good matrimonial prospect. Perhaps some do, but with the larger portion I am sure such things are secondary. There is a growing class of students, of both sexes, who remain "non-org" by choice, and some are prominent in campus activities. That a girl is damned to a dreary, empty existence during her college years because she is not pledged by a sorority, is hardly a fact. Moreover, that such a level-headed girl as Anne Shirley portrays would consider being pledged by an expensive organization when she knows her father is straining the purse strings to send her to school, is an unconvincing facet.

At any rate, as we have said, the performances are of such merit as to place the picture in an upper bracket as a dualer. Anne Shirley has fine emotional depth in her work. She is one of the best dramatic actresses in pictures. James Ellison has not a great deal to do, but is agreeable.

For Dalton Trumbo's screen play it can be said that the dialogue is fluent. Perhaps the original story by Mary Coyle Chase caught campus psychology no better. Nicholas Musuraca has done

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pleasant photographing, and other technical contributions, including the considerable background music from Roy Webb, are of a good sort.

Innocuous but scarcely stimulating. Some of the performances are good, but the yarn, about aspirants to sororities, misses the spirit of campus life.

Another Gangster Film and Sullivan

● **BIG TOWN CZAR**; Universal production; directed by Arthur Lubin; associate producer, Ken Goldsmith; screen play, Edmund Hartmann; based on original by Ed Sullivan; photographed by Elwood Bredell; art director, Jack Otterson; film editor, Philip Cahn; musical director, Charles Previn. Cast: Barton MacLane, Tom Brown, Eve Arden, Jack La Rue, Frank Jenks, Walter Woolf King, Oscar O'Shea, Esther Dale, Horace MacMahon, Jerry Marlowe, Ed Sullivan. Running time, 62 minutes.

Reviewed by Bert Harlen

A ROUTINE gangster film. Purporting to remind us once again that only evil can be expected to come from the tenements, where only "the tough and ugly weeds" survive, the picture never allows its zeal for sociological preachment to get in the way of its spreading sundry excitements across the screen, shootings, gangster intrigues, and the like. I am not wholly questioning the sincerity of Ed Sullivan or Edmund Hartmann, authors respectively of the original story and screen play. I only point out that they have a convenient faculty for keeping one eye on the sensational.

Authors of these preaching melodramas should branch out into more fruitful themes. Take, for instance, "It Is Wrong to Beat Your Wife"—think what drama would lie in the agonized screams of the missus as she is dragged across the floor by the hair. A purely illustrative incident, understand. Or better yet, "Never Hit Your Grandma With a Pickax"—the gory details would be simply colossal.

Sullivan Prominently Cast

¶ Be that as it may, the present picture is undistinguished in either story or treatment. As the story is told, the very basis of it is weak, since we cannot believe that a boy who has been working his way through college, spurning the assistance of his elder brother, a successful racketeer, would suddenly be tempted by the gift of a hundred dollar bill, left behind after the latter's visit, into joining his brother in the racketeering business.

Barton MacLane and Tom Brown do about as well with the parts as could be done. Eve Arden has ability but has little chance to show it here. Statements of a similar pattern could be phrased for most of the other players. Oscar O'Shea

and Esther Dale stand out as the grieved parents.

Ed Sullivan acts as narrator in several parts of the picture and also plays himself in a number of scenes. If he is ambitious to add the art of Thespis to his literary attainments, it is to be hoped he is fortified to brave the critical estimates of his writing colleagues, able to take it as well as dish it out. Mr. Sullivan is terrible. Arthur Lubin directed.

Inferior in story and treatment. Not for children, despite a veneer of moral preachment.

Jonathan Asks for Rehearsal Reform

IN THE last *Spectator* I made public a letter which Jonathan Hale wrote me without thought of its publication. He writes me again, whether for publication or for my exclusive edification. I do not know, but, anyway, I pass the letter on to you.—W. B.

WELFORD!

Do you think that's nice? You have less conscience than a casting director. At your request I mail you a little nut of wisdom, something for your own convenience, and you don't even bother to shell it—just toss it husk and all into your *Spectator*. Why, that's like a director printing a rehearsal you didn't know was being shot. It's just plain low.

However, I must say you printed it in a fine looking magazine. Congratulations on the new *Spectator*. And privately, Welford, I am flattered that you thought it good enough to print in the best publication in the business.

Here is something that will interest you. Oliver Hinsdell, who announces his Studio of Dramatic Art in that same issue, came in this morning. He had just read my stuff about training people for the screen in an ordinary room. He says he is going one better. He is going to train his students on picture sets and with picture scripts and direct them as for camera and microphone. It seems the youngsters will be getting their money's worth of practical instruction. I don't know of another set-up like this. Do you?

Jonathan Discusses Rehearsing

¶ The lack of adequate rehearsal is something that bothers many actors—particularly those fresh from the stage. You carry weight on questions of production results and I know you have thought about this. I'd like to give you one actor's angle to add to the rest of your data and to use, if you like, when you get around to it. The way it is now, we seldom have a reasonable time

to digest our scenes before we put them on a strip of film for the world to look at. Actors go before the camera knowing only their lines.

In the few minutes of rehearsing we do to get the mechanics of the thing worked out for the camera, we must take from each other and give to each other all in way of meaning and characterization that we can snatch out of past experience. There is an opportunity to do something more with it in the closer shots that follow, but nothing very radical.

Stage Allows More Time

¶ Recently I did an eight-page scene, my first in the picture and one of the most important in the story. I deliberately paced it slowly, with nonchalance and ease because that seemed the obvious thing. I felt, too, that I was giving it greater value by the contrast this would provide with what had happened before, which of course, I had read but had not seen shot. Imagine my chagrin when at the preview I found the whole picture was slowly paced. You may blame that on direction, writing, or supervision if you like, but the fact remains that I could have played my scene just as truthfully at a faster, more vital pace. This would have pulled up the tempo and vitality of the whole thing. Had I been there and seen and taken part in a rehearsal of the sequence, I would have done this.

Now contrast this method of working with the weeks of study, coaching and rehearsing a stage production gets. Somewhere in between lies a better way. I have benefited by, and been the victim of, several variations, but I have never seen tried the thing which, to my mind, promises the most success from a performance point of view and, I suspect, from the angle of production economy as well.

Jonathan Makes Suggestion

¶ Here is the idea: Stop production around four-thirty or five o'clock and dismiss the crew. From then until six, rehearse what will be shot the following day. The cameraman and cutter should be present. The advantage of this is that the director has a chance to crystallize his ideas; he is, in a sense, visually a day ahead of his picture; the cameraman has a chance to unravel his problems; the cutter would be of help to both of them, and they to him. But most important, even if those three don't see these advantages—and who am I to say?—the actors get time to think over their scene, sleep on it, digest it down to significant, rounded behavior, clean it up and sharpen it to its dramatic essentials. And here I speak from experience. Many a scene has given me indigestion and I have given many a

(Continued on page 19)

Sound Plea for Silent Technique

BY
W. WARD MARSH

SILENT screen technique in this talkie age has had no more able nor a more consistent defender than Welford Beaton, editor of the *Hollywood Spectator*. Colleges think enough of Beaton and his writings to subscribe generously to his fearless, critical magazine. Women's clubs study his writings. Cinema clubs view him as a defender of the celluloid faith and his publication as the cinema koran. I have seen almost eye to eye with him for years.

Beaton came through Cleveland several years ago when I first began viewing films and asked me to come to his hotel to see him, and I felt a measure of gratification when he told me that in his years of visiting, touring, lecturing and writing he had never before asked a film reviewer to "come over and talk about the screen" with him. I suspect the film industry sees him as one of its more intellectual crack-pots who must be tolerated, if not loved—and so I don't know where I stand with it. But Beaton's prophecies have been so accurately fulfilled that little by little the producers surely must feel that he has a good deal which is worth listening to and worth following.

Read It Several Times

¶ He sent me his newest contribution to the cinema shelves the other day. It is a booklet of not quite 100 pages, called *A Plea and A Play*. He has published it himself, in Hollywood. The inscription on the flyleaf reads, "To Ward Marsh, who, I hope, will agree once more with something I have written, Welford Beaton."

I have read and read it several times, but even reading it the first time, so closely and completely do I agree "once more" with Beaton, that it seemed quite as if I were reading something I had written, the difference being that Beaton has expressed himself with a clarity and terseness I rarely possess.

Less Talk Demanded

¶ He has boiled into one little essay in his *Plea* just about all he has written for and against the talkies since sound and dialogue came in. And his plea amounts to a charge that if the screen does not return to silent technique, using no more dialogue than it once used titles, its doom is sealed. No one asks for the completely silent screen, but everyone, most of all a public registering its protest at the box-offices, is demanding less talk, a wider and better use of music, and the spoken word used only when the visual image is incomplete without it.

This screen art, contends Beaton, and I most heartily concur with him on all points, is essentially a visual one. The

On This Page

THE *Cleveland Plaindealer* is Ohio's greatest newspaper, and in journalistic circles is recognized as one which would have a place on any intelligently compiled list of the ten greatest daily papers in the United States. I mention the standing of the *Plaindealer* to explain the extent of my surprise and gratification when I discovered it had devoted a full column of valuable space in its issue of Sunday, April 9, to a review of my book *A Plea and A Play*. The review was written by W. Ward Marsh, one of the country's better screen commentators. With his permission and the *Plaindealer's* approval, the full review is reprinted on this page.—W. B.

appeal, as it is with music, is straight to the emotions, the movies striking through the eyes and music through the ears, but each reaching the emotions with as little tax as possible on the intellect.

Dialogue does tax the mind, the intellect, and pictures told by dialogue rather than by moving images tax, tire and eventually exhaust the mind before the emotions are properly aroused and the spectator who was actually rested after a visit to the movie house in the silent days is not rested today in the talkie theatre.

Do Not Meet Requirements

¶ No picture today completely fulfills the requirements of silent technique. A picture, and this is my own example, coming closer to silent technique than of the others, would be *Stagecoach*. One fulfilling all the requirements of a talkie and yet being more flexible than one would anticipate from a stage play would be *Pygmalion*.

Beaton pleads for more music, a judicious use of sound, the dropping of dialogue when the players are too far from the spectator for him normally to hear their voices. He sums it up in one sentence, and that is:

"Remedying the evil of too much dialogue is merely a matter of developing intelligent camera technique."

What Story Is About

¶ He proved his case by writing in "silent technique" a script which he has called "A Dog Has His Day," a complete story with 162 spoken lines against 1,500 to 2,500 in the average film of today. This limitation of the spoken word has in no way cramped his style. There is no literary style in pure cine-

ma, anyway, and here is the simple but emotionally effective story of a vegetable man who befriended an orphan girl. She grew up, was given a Scottie puppy, loved by the rich young hero who was in turn loved by the rich young girl. At the climax when it looked as if the heroine's benefactor would be crippled for life, she entered her puppy in a dog show where, after good emotional scenes, he ran off with first prize, and was sold for an amount sufficient to pay doctor's bill and hospital expenses to restore her foster-parent to health—but, as it is in the kind of fiction we like best to read, the story ended happily with her puppy back safely in her arms and the rich young man holding out his to receive both of them.

Recommends the Book

¶ I most urgently recommend Mr. Beaton's little book. It presents in the most concise form I have yet seen twenty difficult lessons in screen writing in one easy lesson. More than that its appeal is for the return to sanity in film making.

I hope he "wins"—and the new "blood" coming into the field quite rapidly these days will see to it that he—and you—eventually will win. I can't give you the price of his new book.* It can't be very high for it has only a paper cover and is inexpensively gotten up. If you are interested in the future of the movies and in one of the best discussions of the day on films, you may reach the author by writing to him in care of the *Hollywood Spectator*, 6513 Hollywood Boulevard, Hollywood, Cal.

A copy of the *Annalist*, published about the same time as Mr. Beaton's book, gives about the same picture as Beaton does of the industry, but different reasons are given for the slump which hit the films in the second quarter last year.

Beaton holds to the view that talkies talk people from the theatre, and the trade papers are at variance with Beaton. Good pictures in the first runs, weak ones in the small towns, and that "box-office poison" squawk which hurt many stars and the industry, too, all served to lower last year's reports.

★ A radio sports commentator quips that the difference between a wrestling match and a moving picture is that the latter moves. He must have missed some of the talkies we have seen.

★ More than two dozen Hollywood film publications have given up the ghost during the *Spectator's* span of life.

*Price, One Dollar.

Film Music and Its Makers

BY
BRUNO DAVID USSHER

NO ONE man can read the annual report made by Will H. Hays, as president of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, with anything but keen appreciation of the social significance exerted by the film as a public entertainment and educational medium. Only one brief and quite general reference however is made to music although the Hays's summary of the trends and functions of the cinema in America is entitled: "Enlarging Scope of the Screen." This is greatly to be regretted and does no justice to the large and artistically high contribution made by hundreds of the best musicians and sound engineers to the cultural and commercial advancement of this "art industry," as President Hays aptly calls it. But this omission is characteristic of a rather prevalent attitude in most executive and promotional branches of Hollywood where public appreciation of music is underrated sadly. And, if it is not actually underrated, then this ideal avenue of "salesmanship" remains deplorably deserted to the disadvantage of all those sharing an interest in the art industry as producing, selling and individually consuming agents.

Slight Not Intended

¶ I am fully aware of the fact that Will Hays had no intention of slighting so vital a branch of his art industry as that of music. Neither need he be reminded what films would be without musicians and music recording experts. I am aware, too, that his written address to the American producers and distributors of motion pictures is not meant as an aesthetic dissertation. But that a paper on the "Enlarging Scope of the Screen" should make repeated reference to the "most popular stars, ablest writers, best directors, most skilful technicians," and make no minimum specification of orchestra, composers, conductors, writers of songs, of lyrics, of singers and instrumentalists, many of the latter the best from the outstanding orchestras of the country—that surely is strange.

Will Hays devotes three and a half of his twenty-six-page report to "Community Service" and to "Education." He speaks of cooperative contacts with the National Education Association since 1922; he also speaks of the cinema committee of the "International Council of Women" and their objective "education of public taste."

Hays's Brief Mention

¶ Here it is that the Hays report faintly acknowledges music as a factor in this "art industry." Here he refers to the regular service rendered by his Hollywood office which "stresses motion

picture appreciation by discussing the educational and other features of individual film production." And now comes the single reference to music: "Moreover, through the progress of this work the National Federation of Music Clubs has been added to the list of pre-viewers, following their approval of what the screen has done to advance interest in music."

Fortunately for Will Hays and luckily for those making film music, the community service and education department of the Hays's office in Hollywood is headed by Mrs. Thomas G. Winter and Mrs. H. D. Field, who perceive and present film music as high and infinitely far reaching from every practical and pedagogic angle.

Entertainment and Box-Office

¶ Far be it from me to remind Will Hays publicly of what he must be aware. He closes the very first paragraph of his report with: "... there is nothing incompatible between the best interests of the box-office and the kind of entertainment that raises the level of audience appreciation whatever the subject treated." And he proceeds to remind his producers: "The discussion that proceeds (as to commercial and cultural) is the greatest possible tribute to the progress of the screen, for it is proof of the fact that an entertainment art for the millions has risen to such high estate that the best which the living theatre has been able to produce or which other artistry can create, is now demanded from the film."

Frankly, it irks me, a believer in the commercial, vocational and artistic function of music, that President Hays should choose to refer only to "other artistry" and not dignify music by direct mention, although commensurate music makes a contribution without which even the best plot, speech, acting and photography remain incomplete in their combined appeal. And by commensurate music, I mean a sufficient amount of the best music. Again, the "best" music does not imply a four-part fugue in six flats. In fact, a lone, lowly mouth organ can prove eloquent of man's state of heart, as demonstrated by Victor Young in his *Man of Conquest* score.

Subtlest of All Factors

¶ Cooperation of the National Federation of Music Clubs in drawing more direct attention to pictures with musically worthwhile scores is a recognition for which Hollywood musicians may be deeply grateful to Mrs. Winter and Mrs. Field. Letters of inquiry and acknowledgement reaching me from the music research council of the National

Education Association indicate that musically well-equipped pictures may eventually count on an enormous number of financially vastly profitable endorsements by public school music teachers throughout the country. Will Hays, when warning producers that they must not rely on American bookings alone, but calculate sales appeal also in terms and tastes of foreign showings, might well have included music as a big and indispensable aid.

Of course, music, subtlest of all cinematic factors, is still in its beginnings, certainly quantitatively. I wonder at times if Hollywood musicians themselves fully vision their social artistic responsibilities. Again, they must have the articulate support from lay music lovers and educators alike in order to convince certain ignorantly economic producers.

Strong But Not Noisy

¶ Victor Young's extensive background score for *Man of Conquest* forms a dramatically indispensable and generally strong contribution to this Republic production. It is a strong, yet not noisy score for a film moving vividly in terms of physical action and emotional stress. Some day, a chapter in film music history will have to be devoted to music in films based on American bibliography and history, and the Young score will be listed as an example for its thoughtful and unobvious use of American music. Naturally, pictures such as *Alexander's Ragtime Band* or the *Castle* films will be included, but more as film musical documentations of tunes. In those pictures, the popular songs a score of years ago are the excuse for the pictures.

In Young's score, these American tunes fulfil a higher function, for they attest the Americanism of Sam Houston and his period. Victor Young has gone to these tunes as a folklorist does to identify a race by their songs and in turn to diagnose the character of songs by the milieu from which they sprang and to which they gave living color.

Parallel or Portent

¶ There are times when I should have preferred more music, and when I was conscious of music being limited to rather brief episodes; while rapidly and radically changing scenes in *Man of Conquest* would have made it difficult, no doubt, to write even "against the scene." One is apt to grow weary of too much action accent hitting, or shall I call it action metric music? Music can match the general pace of a scene, or it can go "against" the scene by serving as an outside, narratively reflecting commentator. It can prove an auditory

"flash-back" by relating the scene current on the screen with a scene or dialogue seen or heard earlier in the picture.

Thus it may be "motivating" music. Too, it can express premeditation and foretell or foreshadow what may be said or may happen. Victor Young has applied these various principles. What makes this score significant is that he has not written a prescription for himself and dosed himself time and again. He has analyzed, scene by scene, I would judge, and then diagnosed whether he needed paralleling action music, or music of portentous character, whatever this portent.

Campfire Not Moonlight

¶ There is a danger of expecting some metaphorical nightingale to go into some belcanto by way of some properly sweetened violins or flutes. In *Man of Conquest* the heroine, when chided by her mother over the dish-pan that her friend still had a wife living somewhere, goes out to him and tells him of her love and of her loyalty in defiance of all what the "nice girl" of that tightly-laced period would not do. "Now I have said it," she punctuates and underlines her disregard of convention. And he, still afraid to claim her until he had established his claim to a new existence, fights within himself, not to smother her and hold her with all that is yearning in him for her. Perhaps there should have been music, a kind of music far different from *Moonlight and Roses*, of course.

Trying It Either Way

¶ It would have had to be music compounded of every dramatic psychological motif, stirring and restraining the two lovers. Could it be done in this brief campfire scene with its brief crescendo of action and deliberate speech? Are the subsequent scenes such as to compose through them in that vein without underlaying a background music quite alien to them? Having witnessed *Man of Conquest* once only, I cannot go beyond speculating. Most times, one can only (attempt to) judge what one has heard. What one wishes to hear is another matter, and if by some miracle one's wishes were fulfilled in a film musical laboratory, then still the test of audition might go against one's wishes.

I have just seen again *You Can't Take It With You*. I believe more could have been done with it musically than actually was done. One scene, however, impressed me as effective without "benefit of music." I am referring to the park scene, when the two inarticulate lovers sit on a bench and a little waterfall in the background furnishes sufficient urgency of action and sound. No "Caro Nome" of any kind could have added proof that these two young

things are dumbly crazy about each other and will go through with it.

No Sausages, Please

¶ Of course, there is not the slightest doubt in my mind that while the beautifully low dialogue of the two sweethearts in *You Can't Take It With You* is in its present form a sort of verbal song of their hearts, the *Man of Conquest* declaration of love could have been strengthened by music. I mean that music should have commenced possibly prior to the dishwashing scene and that scenes following the campfire episode should have been transferred or transposed so that Young could have composed through them without distorting their mood.

That would imply the composer's presence when the script is put together, when the action is photographed and when the film is assembled, cut and edited. I will be told that this would mean paying the composer for six days' or six weeks' more or less hectic efforts. I will be told that this would make music too heavy an item in the budget.

As Composers View It

¶ The better composers in Hollywood today, I believe, would rather go on a weekly salary of moderate size and have the same creative time privileges accorded other artists in the film world, than be compelled to perform some legerdemain at a speed which is bound to limit some of the best in them. The trouble is that producers too often still think of music as electrically speeded sausage machines. I have no intention of applying this remark to the producer of *Man of Conquest*, for I understand Republic studios believe in ample scores. On the whole, however, Hollywood producers and directors underestimate the function of music in relation to films. They are unaware of the "script difficulties" of a composer, script difficulties far more complex and subtle than those of writers and directors because the composer must fit his script to that of the screen playwright and director.

It might cost studios a little more to put a composer on a weekly salary basis from the script stage on, than hand him a flat sum for writing a score, yet the difference would be worth the increased calibre of the film by virtue of a filmically finer score. I venture to say that the better composers would be willing to sit in during the script stage before their weekly stipend period commences, just for the sake of producing something more artistic. One reason for the number of musical blowouts are prevailing racetrack tempi in making scores.

Within Spirit of Time

¶ Victor Young has conceived a score for *Man of Conquest* which keeps within the spirit of the times. It was not

what one could call an "instrumental" time. The use of singing voices in the main title and the closing sequence is a thoughtful touch and, used in both places, seems to frame the picture like the fore and end page decorations of a book. Patriotic and folk songs are drawn on. I stress "drawn on" because Young adapts sometimes not more than the characteristic melodic turn out of which he evolves his own themes.

Doing this, he has avoided everything which would give the score the smattering of an American medley of the old style band music style, while nevertheless setting atmosphere and aiming at a heart response which lives in everyone to whom this story of Tennessee and Texas means more than dead and dusty history. Use of a little reed organ only in the wedding scene was better than anything elaborate Young could have chosen, for this is the story of a plain man, though nevertheless the story of a man of strong feelings and strong determination.

Fine Sense of Proportion

¶ Young has never tried to glorify Sam Houston or make scenes bigger beyond their actual significance. In this score he reminds me of the man who illuminates with a touch of color, and with gold at times, the large initials at the top of a chapter page or paragraph. The result is that sometimes the text itself has been left black and white, as it were, at seemingly long stretches. He has not used his colors gaudily either. Houston "stewing" in his river boat cabin, brooding over the desertion of his wife could not have been painted a lonelier figure than by the sound of a mouth organ. Actually trick-muted violins.

The simple fiddle tune in the camp scene again demonstrates a fine sense of proportion without being an attempt at realism. Time and again, I was surprised at the absence of music, yet the use of the delicate little tune *Come to the Bower* as a riding-fighting tune when Houston's Texans charge the Mexican army, is a brilliant touch in its winsome simplicity. In the battle scene, too, Young does not make grandiloquent war music. He treats it as drama of great suspense to his characters and to a man to whom Texas means future life and love.

Thematic Development

¶ By no means do I wish to give the impression that Young has played purely the miniaturist. It is lithographic music rather than color printing most of the time. There is real seething in the oil fire sequence, but the slowly dragging, winding theme for the retreat, the curiously, sweltering suspense music before the battle are curiously graphic in their discard of everything superfluously coloristic. Young's musical Amer-

icanism is cleverly instanced with a hymn-like melody based on *My Country 'tis of Thee*, expressive also of President Jackson's devotion to his country. Altogether Young has done more by way of thematic development than can be pointed out here. Quite unusual is his process of transforming an old-fashioned polka dance theme into a love motif. (Houston meets his second wife at a dance in the White House.) There is an earlier love theme—the first Mrs. Houston was a Tennessean—and so Young has gone to a Southern courting song: *I Knew a Lady So Kind and Sweet*.

A Reaction Score

¶ All in all, one might describe Victor Young's *Man of Conquest* music a "reaction" score, although the tie between action is close. The music never attempts to stampede emotions. In the midst of battle, for instance, Houston's aide hauls down the enemy flag and hoists the Stars and Stripes. A bullet strikes him down, but sinking to the ground he pulls the colors to the full height of the mast. Young enters neither into tonal heroics nor a dirge, but over the tide of sound rises a bugle call, softly, yet in significant triumph. Or, to come back to his music for the charge: No blaring bugles; the piccolo trills that quaint *Come to the Bower* motif over sustained notes of drums and strings. (From a modernist standpoint the bunching of E-flat, E-major and F-major is noteworthy.) It tells enough of onrush and tension.

I have already mentioned the psychological effect of the retreat motif, showing weary riders and weary horses. The clinging sound of a dull vibraphone emphasizes the heaviness of spirit and body dragged on seemingly without aim. The use of Indian themes or that naive barn dance with a little plumage borrowed from *Turkey In the Straw* bring the score again down to immediate reality.

Man of Conquest is not a grandiloquent picture although it does recite sentiments which will re-echo in an America of sane patriotism. Young has not turned out the musical honor guard and fired his musical musketry just for the love of banking away. I say again that I wish he had added more music yet, for this is a score of unusual blending of action and reaction music, written with an unusual and inventive craftsmanship.

★ Foreign films are growing in popularity in this country. There are now eight houses in Los Angeles screening such films. This growth of cosmopolitan taste is one of the factors which eventually will force Hollywood to abandon the making of shoddy films and concentrate upon quality products.

This Hollywood

A GOOD sized nail is hit resoundingly on the head by B. R. Crisler, writing in the *New York Times* on the stereotyped "glamour" with which Hollywood is wont to encase its feminine players. One of the most baneful influences on the motion picture art, he opines, is the artifice of make-up and costuming, which have slowly ripened into "monstrous perfection . . . through the activities of those painstaking pygmaliions" of the make-up and wardrobe departments.

"For," Crisler contends, "in the movies glamour is strictly an applied art: a beauty not even skin deep which melts in the sun, streaks in the rain . . . a mask to be removed at night, exposing the tired, all-too-human tissues beneath. And this, precisely, is the basic fallacy of the glamour concept: that it violates the most fundamental canon of what remains, after all, an inescapably naturalistic art. Hollywood's denatured dream girls are, of necessity, spiritually static, with no more 'soul' than a geisha. With the make-up man constantly standing by to pat the perspiration from her face and with 'wardrobe' dancing attendance to guard her gown (specially designed to minimize anatomical defects) from wrinkles, she is far above the plane of mortal infirmities, and consequently is as uninteresting, psychologically, as a statue in a museum."

Who Is Who?

¶ Truly spoken. Moreover, it is not only humanness actresses are robbed of by this striving for superficial perfection, but also individuality, so standardized have the methods of the glamour craftsmen become. Make-up men are by far the greatest offenders. Many young actresses are placed under an actual handicap in impressing themselves on the public mind. Almost all of them look alike. Especially is this to be noticed in the publicity stills appearing in the press. Not uncommonly I have difficulty in recognizing an established player, and more often than not in the case of a newer actress I have to consult the caption before the photograph conveys any impression of an entity, and this despite the fact that I am in close touch with the industry. Such pictures are dominantly but a repetition of the familiar sweepingly arched eyebrows, suspiciously long eyelashes, and lips bowed like ravens' wings.

Anachronism Created

¶ Where the standardized make-up has its most distracting influence, with respect to the dramatic values of motion pictures, is in costume dramas, where the faces of the feminine players generally create a gross anachronism.

BY
BERT HARLEN

The other day, while lunching at a studio commissary, I looked forth upon an aggregation of women at a near-by table who were arrayed in costumes of the Civil War or late Victorian period, at least of an era when make-up was used sparingly, if at all, by women. Each actress, however, was done up as though she were in the *Follies*. Why directors allow such violations of the visual compositions upon which the dramatic potency of motion pictures principally is dependent, is something I could never understand. Sums of money and great pains and time are expended on gathering historical data and working for authenticity in the screen play, the sets, properties, costumes, and then feminine players are permitted to insert faces into the scene which look made-up for a burlesque.

* *

He Carries On

TWICE I have seen him alight late at night from one of those rickety and grimy "V" street cars which service Vermont Avenue of Los Angeles, and disappear into the darkness of a neighborhood of apartment houses which is barely respectable. At first glance one might think his clothes nobby. They are well pressed, of good tailoring, and the brim of his hat is jauntily turned down all around. But closer inspection, especially of the slanting heels of his shoes, tells a different story.

Once his creation of a country boy on the screens of the world, a strangely wistful, dreamy fellow, sprung from the earth, appealed to millions. His name was as important in the motion picture firmament as that of Charles Chaplin or Mary Pickford; had his own studio. It is a name which would be prominent in any history of the great industry.

To No One's Credit

¶ The circumstances attending his apparent difficulty I am not acquainted with. Maybe he is too proud to accept financial assistance. More than likely little or none has been proffered. It would seem, though, that some one among the famous and influential Hollywood personalities he has known in the past, could offer or procure for him some position in motion picture work which would enable him to live on a respectable scale—out of sentiment, if for no other reason; out of respect for a figure who played so great a part in the building of the industry which has showered them with success and riches so abundantly, and partly through the grace of Providence. From some aspects Hollywood seems a very callous place.

New Spectator Format Pleases Readers

Don Ameche—Congratulations on your anniversary number. Your record is one of continual achievement and I know that all Hollywood joints be in wishing you many more years of success.

Cary Grant—With anything as candid, courageous and constructive as the Spectator, the bigger the better. Congratulations on the new size and format.

Kay Francis—You could print it on butcher paper and it would still be on my "must" list. But the new size and shiny paper are a definite improvement.

Frank McDonald—I want to congratulate you on the latest Spectator; the new form and set-up is very attractive and bright.

Barbara Stanwyck—You deserve a few thousand more subscribers.

David Niven—The Spectator's contents leave no room for improvement, so I suppose if you had to do something, there was nothing left but to make it larger and smoother. Congratulations on a fine job.

Bob Burns—Your new paper is slick; your editor always has been.

Joy Hodges—Greetings to the Spectator on its fourteenth birthday, and congratulations on the new dress and make-up.

Warner Baxter—The Spectator may still be in its teens, but it is a wise, wise child. May it live to a ripe old age, Welford.

Alice Faye—You can be justly proud of your fine record. My wishes for your continued success.

Chester Morris—Nice to see the Hollywood Spectator in its brand new 1939 clothes. Looks like a honey . . . congratulations!

Lucille Ball—The Spectator has grown up in size and dress. The new format fits my reading table perfectly.

William Keighley—It all proves that a constructive editorial policy pays.

Richard Greene—Your opinions are a priceless service to the industry. Keep up the good work.

Sonja Henie—Heartiest wishes for your continued success.

Humphrey Bogart—The best of luck to the revitalized Spectator in its new form.

Priscilla Lane—I like the Spectator in its new garb.

Madeleine Carroll—Good work, Welford. I like the new size and your method of handling reviews of extraordinary pictures.

Tyrone Power—Birthday greetings to the Spectator. It's the top.

Wendy Barrie—Congratulations on the new size and make-up of the Hollywood Spectator. I like it even better in this new, larger, easy-to-read format.

Bryan Foy—May the Spectator have many more years of Beaton success.

John Cromwell—It always has been a pleasure to read the Spectator for its constructive comments on screen affairs. Its new form adds to the pleasure.

Joel McCrea—Congratulations on your new Spectator.

William Dieterle—The enlarged Spectator should allow this worthy publication to materially increase its scope.

Errol Flynn—I wish the Spectator the greatest possible good fortune under its new policy.

Fred MacMurray—Happiness.

Olivia de Havilland—If the first issue of your enlarged paper is any indication, my interest, which is already great, is going to be substantially enhanced.

On This Page

WHILE we were so busy getting out a Spectator in a new form which would please us, it never occurred to us to wonder how its readers would like it. But after the last issue appeared, all dolled up in its new clothes, we not for long were left in doubt about how it pleased others. Apparently we fashioned better than we expected or underestimated the degree of friendship readers have for the Spectator, for we were totally unprepared for the avalanche of approving messages which poured in on it.

In the belief that readers outside of Hollywood will be interested in learning how the Spectator is regarded by its neighbors, we asked the publicity departments of the various studios to secure for us statements for publication to amplify those already received by word of mouth, letter, telephone and, in not a few cases, by telegraph. On this page, then, is what Hollywood thinks of the Spectator.

Lee Tracy—Though it won't fit with my old file of the Spectator which I have kept for years, I'll be starting a new one with this new, slick-looking size. Altogether, a definite forward step.

George Brent—I'm delighted to see the Spectator take on added significance.

Andy Devine—Happy birthday and lots of luck in the new get-up.

Max Steiner—Congratulations to you, Welford.

Gregory Ratoff—Congratulations, Welford. Your Spectator should get the award for the best production of the decade. My wishes for many more happy birthdays.

Irene Hervey—Felicitations on your anniversary, and best wishes for many happy readers.

Leo Carrillo—The new dress and make-up of the Spectator now match the high quality of its contents. I always have enjoyed reading the magazine and will like it even more in its new garb.

John Mack Brown—Happy birthday, pardner, and keep calling your shots.

Steffi Duna—"Fine feathers make fine birds," it is said, and certainly the Spectator is more than worthy of the improvement in paper and size. It is now made-up in a manner to fit its high quality. It is one magazine I never fail to read.

Bette Davis—Congratulations to Welford Beaton upon the increased size of the Spectator.

Rob Wagner—If the Spectator had to be improved, the only way to do it was to make it typographically more attractive, because the literary quality has always been at its peak. A long life and a merry one!

Charlie McCarthy—Congratulations to the new Spectator, and let the sparks fly. Ditto from Bergen.

Henry Koster—Best of luck to the new Spectator.

Hal B. Wallis—The new format of the Spectator gives your worthy publication the additional importance that it merits.

Jack Benny—Hollywood's best magazine before; the world's now.

Bing Crosby—You have a real message, Welford. You deserve a swell new suit like this slick paper.

Jane Withers—To Mr. Beaton and the Spectator, greetings, and may you always be happy. P.S. It's my thirteenth birthday, too!

Joe Pasternak—Heartiest congratulations on your fourteenth anniversary, and best wishes for continued success.

Lloyd Bacon—Your new format indicates another important step forward.

J. Carrol Naish—I have been waiting for an opportunity to tell you what an influence you are to good motion picture production. In sound and action the industry is following your advice day by day. I have noticed the trend.

Allan Dwan—Anniversary greetings. Yours is a brilliant record.

Claudette Colbert—Slick paper or that unshiny stuff, Welford. You have what it takes, no matter what the material.

Crane Wilbur—Congratulations to you, Welford Beaton.

Henry King—It is we who celebrate the Spectator's thirteenth birthday and its attractive new form. Its intelligent, penetrating criticism is a constructive factor in the motion picture industry.

Juanita Quigley—Many happy returns, Mr. Beaton.

Bob Hope—Congrats, Welford, on the new Spectator. This is my tenth year on the subscription list—or is it twenty?

Irving Cummings—My blessings on the Spectator and its justly proud father, Welford.

Hally Chester, of Universal's "Little Tough Guys"—Congratulations, mister. Not a bad-looking sheet.

Frank Borzage—No dispute as to which magazine is best in your line.

Henry Blanke—I am glad to note that the Spectator continues to improve.

Norman Foster—To Welford Beaton. Many happy returns of the day to you and your Spectator.

Nan Grey—Greetings on your fourteenth anniversary, and loads of luck and prosperity.

Gracie and Georgie—Many happy returns of subscriptions. You have our regards.

Wesley Ruggles—Come over and have lunch with me, Welford. I want to buy it in celebration.

Sidney Lanfield—May the Spectator's fourteenth year be its best.

Mischa Auer—Congratulations to the Spectator on its fourteenth anniversary. The older you get, the better you look.

George Archainbaud—Your staff is tops—the magazine is great, Welford.

Michael Curtiz—Now the Spectator will be able to render increased service to the industry.

Cesar Romero—My sincere wishes for many more fruitful years.

Cecil B. deMille—"Union Pacific" isn't streamlined like your new magazine, but I hope it's as good a show.

Nancy Kelly—Congratulations to you and the new Spectator. From one of your many admirers.

(Continued on page 19)

Books and Films

Pennsylvania D.A.R.

¶ This organization has a national motion picture chairman and also a motion picture chairman for each state. The chairman for Pennsylvania, Mrs. Raymond H. Bear, reports that 62 of the 127 chapters in her state have motion picture chairmen, that 25 chapters are cooperating with other organizations, that 18 have one meeting a year devoted to motion pictures, that 35 chapters report satisfactory cooperation with local theatre managers, that nine chapters have active junior members.

Mrs. Bear also states that double features are being eliminated gradually and that her chapters are active in placing study guides and stills in schools and libraries.

Mentioned as outstanding in film work is the Berks County Chapter, in Reading, Pennsylvania, Miss Grace Frame, chairman. This chapter was one of the organizers of the Motion Picture Forums, started last September, whose president is the English teacher in the high school. The schools have photoplay appreciation classes.

Miss Frame won the national prize from Hollywood for securing the greatest number of subscriptions to the D.A.R. Motion Picture Guide.

This seems to be a fine report, especially when it is remembered that film work is only one of the many activities of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Greater Detroit Picture Council

¶ The Greater Detroit Motion Picture Council, Mr. W. W. Whittinghill, president, has the following list of well defined aims: (a) to secure and distribute information concerning the complete programs of the motion picture industry; (b) to emphasize parental responsibility in motion picture selection; (c) to know and cooperate with theatre managers; (d) to investigate and evaluate film productions; (e) to support and publicize approved films; (f) to work cooperatively with agencies in reducing violations of good taste in advertising; (g) to urge booking of more educational and travel films in community theatres; (h) to voice opinions in constructive manner concerning those activities of the industry and theatres which are considered to be detrimental to the welfare of audiences; (i) to urge the use of approved films in all community centers; (j) to keep informed on all phases of film legislation, production, distribution and use, including the study of international film problems; (k) to cooperate with all public agencies in a program of better films; (l) to initiate public relation programs; (m) to integrate and coordinate all program

activities of the Council; (n) to report and appraise the result of these programs.

The Hobby Family

¶ Libraries should rejoice in the fact that Warner Brothers will produce, this summer, a picture to be titled *The Hobby Family*. The story concerns a family whose members indulge in assorted hobbies. Henry O'Neill will be the head of the family; Jane Bryan will have the feminine lead as his daughter.

There is a wealth of good books about hobbies and libraries have ever been active in circulating these. With the times tending toward more leisure, the subject of hobbies becomes increasingly important. The pensions of many retired persons are sufficient for living expenses, but do not allow a margin to take care of the expense that must be incurred if leisure is to be enjoyed or become of benefit. Of course, books are a blessing but no one can read all of the time. Many of these retired people are alone in the world and for these to make a home would be a lonely way out. An inexpensive hobby is one satisfactory solution of the problem.

It seems difficult to believe there are individuals who do not know there are a large number of books that will greatly increase the benefit and enjoyment to be gained from riding a hobby horse. Yet on one occasion, after I had broadcast an "Everyman's Treasure House" program consisting in part of a list of books on the making of marionettes, a man came to the Cleveland Library and said he had been making marionettes for years but that, until he heard the radio talk, he did not know that there would be books that would help him.

A Study Club Suggestion

¶ This is the season when most clubs prepare their programs for next season. Why do not history clubs, and also those including some study of history, in their year's activities, plan this work in connection with coming important historical films? This idea, if adopted by clubs throughout the country, would be a challenge to producers to make historical films as authentic as to plot as they already are as to period.

The same idea applies to biographical films and is particularly appropriate for travel films. How delightful to see a film depicting an interesting locality at the same time one is learning about it.

Embarrassing Film Titles

¶ Libraries doing film cooperation are often put to it to find a way out when some film with which they wish to cooperate, bears a title that, posted in a library, is wholly inappropriate and occasionally ridiculous. Both producers

BY
INA ROBERTS

and theatre managers should remember that people are in one mood in a theatre, but usually in quite a different mood in a library, even though they may have come there to get books connecting with some film.

A Film Star's Hobby

¶ Certainly, the film stars can give us lessons in the variety of their hobbies and the eagerness with which they pursue them. George Brent, for instance, finds relaxation in blacksmithing. This actor has a combination machine, carpentry and blacksmithing shop in his home, where he fashions many useful and beautiful articles for himself and his friends. He has just given Bette Davis, with whom he is working in *The Old Maid*, a set of wrought-iron garden furniture for her new Brentwood home.

CURRENT FILMS

Alexander Graham Bell—Don Ameche, Loretta Young; released 3-29; rev. Spec. 4-15. 20th-Fox
Calling Dr. Kildare—Formerly *Dr. Kildare's Mistake*; Lionel Barrymore, Lew Ayres; released 4-14. MGM
Dark Victory—Play by Brewer, Jr., and Bloch; Bette Davis, George Brent; rev. Spec. 3-18; released 4-26. Warner
Dodge City—Technicolor; Santa Fe R.R.; Olivia de Havilland, Errol Flynn. Warner
Family Next Door—Hugh Herbert, Ruth Donnelly. Univ.
Hardy's Ride High—Rev. Spec. 4-29. MGM
Romance of the Redwoods—Story by London; Jean Parker, Charles Bickford. Col.
Story of Vernon and Irene Castle—Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers; rev. Spec. 4-15; released 4-28. RKO
Streets of New York—Jackie Cooper. Mono.
Three Smart Girls Grow Up—Deanna Durbin; rev. Spec. 4-1. Univ.
Wuthering Heights—Novel by Emily Bronte; rev. Spec. 4-1. U.A.

COMING FILMS

Boys' Reformatory—Frankie Darro. Mono.
Bridal Suite—Formerly *Maiden Voyage*; Robert Montgomery; released 5-26. MGM
Captain Fury—Australia, 1840; Brian Aherne, Paul Lukas. U.A.
Confessions of a Nazi Spy—Released 5-6. Warner
Each Dawn I Die—Novel by Jerome Odlum; James Cagney, Ann Sheridan; released late summer. Warner
Federal Offense—Based on *Persons in Hiding*, by J. Edgar Hoover; Ellen Drew, Lloyd Nolan. Para.
Gantry the Great—Blind Wonder Horse; June release tentative. Warner
Goodbye, Mr. Chips—Novel by Hilton; Robert Donat, Greer Garson; released 6-2. MGM
Gracie Allen Murder Case—Comedy; based on story by S. S. Van Dine. Para.
Heritage of the Desert—Novel by Zane Grey; Evelyn Venable, Donald Woods; released 6-23. Para.
It's a Wonderful World—Comedy; James Stewart, Claudette Colbert. MGM

Juarez—Paul Muni, Bette Davis; autumn release. Warner
Jones Family In Hollywood—Released 6-2. 20th-Fox
Maiden Voyage—Robert Montgomery; released April. MGM
Only Angels Have Wings—Formerly *Plane No. 4*; Cary Grant, Jean Arthur, Richard Barthelmess, Lionel Stander; released 5-15. Col.
Rose of Washington Square—Musical; Alice Faye, Al Jolson; released 5-12. 20th-Fox
Sorority House—Anne Shirley; released 5-12. RKO
Stanley and Livingstone—Spencer Tracy; released 9-2. 20th-Fox
Susannah of the Mounties—Juvenile by Muriel Denison; Shirley Temple; released 7-28. 20th-Fox
Tell No Tales—Formerly *Hundred to One*; newspaper story; Melvyn Douglas. MGM
The Dove—Play by Willard Mack; Leo Carrillo, Steffi Duna. RKO
Torchy Runs for Mayor—Glenda Farrell, Barton McLane; released 5-13; rev. Spec. 4-1. Warner
Union Pacific—Barbara Stanwyck, Joel McCrea; released 5-5. Para.
Wolf Call—Story by London; Movita, John Carroll. Mono.
Young Mr. Lincoln—Henry Fonda; released 6-9. 20th-Fox
Zenobia—Formerly *Spring Again*; based on *Zenobia's Infidelity*; S. S. by H. C. Bunner (in *Short Sixes*). U.A.

IN PRODUCTION

Andy Hardy Gets Spring Fever—Andy turns playwright; school play. MGM
Beau Geste—Novel by Wren; Gary Cooper. Para.
Briton at Yale—Comedy; Richard Greene. 20th-Fox
Career—Play by Stong and Erskine; Anne Shirley, Edward Ellis. RKO
Cat and the Canary—Play by John Willard; Paulette Goddard, Bob Hope. Para.
Disputed Passage—Novel by Lloyd Douglas; Dorothy Lamour, Akim Tamiroff; autumn release. Para.
Dust Be My Destiny—Novel by Jerome Odum; John Garfield, Pat O'Brien. Warner
Enemy Agent—Based on play *Three Faces East*; Leon C. Turrou, Margaret Lindsay. Warner
Family Reunion—Formerly *American Family*; based on play *Fly Away Home*, by Dorothy Bennett; Priscilla Lane, John Garfield. Warner
Geronimo—Apaches in Southwest; Preston Foster, Ellen Drew. Para.
Gone With the Wind—Novel by Margaret Mitchell; Leslie Howard, Vivien Leigh, Clark Gable, Olivia de Havilland. MGM
Good Girls Go to Paris, Too—Melvyn Douglas, Joan Blondell, Walter Connolly; old-time and modern dancing featured. Col.
Hobby Family—Assorted hobbies; Irene Rich, Henry O'Neill. Warner
Home Work—Charles Ruggles, Mary Boland. Para.
Music School—Jascha Heifetz. U.A.
Little Mother—Play by Felix Jackson; Ginger Rogers. RKO
Man in the Iron Mask—Louis Hayward, Joan Bennett, Doris Kenyon as Queen Anne. U.A.
Memory of Love—Novel by Bessie Breuer; Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. RKO

Mr. Smith Goes to Washington—Continues adventures of Mr. Smith, Jean Arthur, James Stewart, Claude Rains, Guy Kibbee, Eugene Pallette. Col.
On Borrowed Time—Novel by Edward Lawrence Katkin; Frank Morgan; Sir Cedric Hardwicke. MGM
Our Leading Citizen—Bob Burns, Susan Hayward. Para.
Red Cross Nurse. 20th-Fox
Ruler of the Seas—Epic of sail vs. steam. Para.
Second Fiddle—Formerly *When Winter Comes*; based on *Heart Interest*; play by George Bradshaw; songs by Irving Berlin; Sonja Henie, Rudy Vallee, Don Ameche; released 6-27. 20th-Fox
Star-Maker—Semi-biography of Gus Edwards; released 8-25 (tent.). Para.
The Old Maid—Novel by Edith Wharton; play by Zoe Akins; Bette Davis, Miriam Hopkins, George Brent. Warner
The Sun Never Sets—Backgrounds filmed in London and Far East; Basil Rathbone, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. Univ.
The Wizard of Oz—Juvenile by Frank Baum; Judy Garland, Mickey Rooney; August release. MGM
The Women—Play by Clare Booth; Norma Shearer, Joan Crawford, Rosalind Russell. MGM
What a Life—Play by Clifford Goldsmith; high school age; Jackie Cooper, Betty Field, John Howard. Para.
Winter Carnival—Sports; Ann Sheridan, Richard Carlson. U.A.

FUTURE FILMS

Abe Lincoln in Illinois—Play by Robert Sherwood; Raymond Massey. RKO
American Way—Play by Kaufman and Moss. RKO
American School Teacher—Bob Burns; production to start in June. RKO
Babes In Arms—Musical play by Rodgers and Hart; Judy Garland, Mickey Rooney. MGM
Chicken Wagon Family—Novel by Barry Benefield; production begins 5-2. 20th-Fox
Coast Guard—Ralph Bellamy, Randolph Scott; production begins May. Col.
Desert Storm—Desert filling station; Humphrey Bogart, Margaret Lindsay; production begins May. Warner
Diary of Santa Fe—Based on records of Capt. D. S. Stanley, 1853; Errol Flynn, Olivia de Havilland. Warner
Father Damien—Priest of Hawaiian leper colony; a character is R. L. Stevenson. 20th-Fox
Hollywood Cavalcade—Alice Faye; production begins 5-15. 20th-Fox
Housekeeper's Daughter—Novel by Donald Henderson Clark; production starts about 5-15. U.A.
Intermezzo—Original screen play; production begins June. U.A.
Knight and the Lady—Elizabethan; Bette Davis, Errol Flynn; production begins 5-15. Warner
Moon and Sixpence—Novel by W. S. Maugham; Edward G. Robinson. Warner
My Fifth Avenue Girl—Redbook serial by Frank Adams; Ginger Rogers. RKO
Old Grad—Anita Louise, Charley Grapevin. Univ.
Real Glory—Philippines; Gary Cooper, Andrea Leeds, David Niven. U.A.
Rebecca—Novel by Daphne Du Maurier; production begins June. U.A.
Stronger Than Desire—Novel by W. E. Woodward; Robert Montgomery, Virginia Bruce. MGM

The Rains Came—Novel by Bromfield; Ronald Colman, H. B. Warner, Myrna Loy, Maria Ouspenskaya, George Brent, Tyrone Power; released 10-28. 20th-Fox

JONATHAN ASKS FOR REHEARSAL (Continued from page 12)

scene a look of the same disorder.

Too much rehearsing is bad. Everybody agrees on that. But when you get a tough scene that takes a lot of working out, it is much worse to do it just before you shoot it than it would be to do it the day before. People get stale after an hour of the same three or four pages and it is an added difficulty to know you have to pull one out of a hat that is long since empty.

These are things I'd like to see you take up because I am sure they would result in better pictures. Of course, it is all from the actor's point of view, but, after all, actors have a part in making pictures.—JONATHAN.

FORMAT PLEASES READERS

(Continued from page 17)

Lewis Milestone—Well, after all these years! Good work!

Erich Wolfgang Korngold—I am happy to see the Spectator further progressing.

Robert Lord—Congratulations to the new Spectator.

Frank Lloyd—When better ideas are thought of, you'll do the thinking.

Richard Wallace—Streamlined and right up-to-date. A great improvement.

Mortimer Snerd, Universal star—The new Spectator looks good to me—but where are the pictures?

Sidney Toler—The Spectator mirrors the sagacity of a wise father. Regards.

Tim Holt—I like the enlarged Spectator very much. The fine paper makes it easier to read and the increased space makes it able to add to its interesting contents. I never miss it.

John Howard—I'm boosting for the Spectator more than ever.

★ "A very big dollar's worth. I hope your picture people will adopt it as their guide in making their pictures, which now are talking far too much."—Walter G. Smith, Omaha, Nebraska. *A Plea and A Play*, by Welford Beaton; price one dollar. *Hollywood Spectator*, 6513 Hollywood Boulevard, Hollywood.

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RKO - Radio



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Columbia Pictures



Hollywood **SPECTATOR**

20 CENTS

Every Other Week

Edited by WELFORD BEATON

Fourteenth Year

Los Angeles, California—July 22, 1939

Vol. 14—No. 8

Writing Film Stories To Fit
Players Not Good Box-Office

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Theme for Great Screen Epic

Bruno Ussher's Estimate of
Sam Goldwyn's Heifetz Picture



REVIEWED:

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Unexpected Father



Career

Million Dollar Legs



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From the EDITOR'S EASY CHAIR

PICTURES AND THEIR AUDIENCE

RECOMMENDED for reading is the June-July number of *Cinema Progress*, edited by Boris Morokvin, the capable head of the cinema department of University of Southern California. The typographically attractive 36-page publication is full of the kind of material which would make profitable reading for all those engaged in the creative branches of picture-making. In the list of those whose opinions are expressed are such practical screen names as King Vidor, William Wellman, Mitchell Leisen, Leigh Jason, Henry King, S. Sylvan Simon, Milton Sperling, John Brahm. Thoughtful and valuable articles are contributed by other experts in various phases of film production.

Of course, some of the opinions expressed are open to challenge. For instance, let me quote Leigh Jason: "Critics are unfair when they judge all pictures by the standards they set up for an artistic picture. There are at least three widely differing, but overlapping types of audiences; the intelligent audience which enjoys the best artistic pictures; the middle class audience which wants light entertainment; the less intelligent audience which enjoys only western and action pictures."

Cause of Box-Office Worries

¶ Jason here classifies the kind of pictures the public is being offered now, and unconsciously puts his finger on the weak spot in Hollywood's production methods, the weakness responsible for box-office conditions which are causing producers so much concern. When pictures were silent there was but one audience, the public as a whole. Lack of knowledge of the fundamental appeal of their medium was not a serious matter then, as mechanical limitations made it necessary for screen stories to be told in pictorial language, the most primitive form of expression, one which left its interpretation to the imagination, not to the intellect, of its audience. Thus the story had the same appeal to all those who saw it on the screen in that it appealed to one hundred per cent of the imaginative power of each beholder. The scholar and the moron did not get the same story, but each got the one his imagination was capable of fashioning. Thus silent pictures had but one audience.

Producers will tell you that prior to the advent of sound the public was getting tired of silent pictures, a fact established by dwindling box-office receipts.

The public was not tiring of silents as such; it was tiring of the kind it was getting. Because you tire of eating corn beef and cabbage every day, you can not be accused of becoming tired of eating.

Embarked On a New Business

¶ When the screen began to talk, the motion picture industry went into an entirely new business, a fact of which it still is unconscious. Instead of sticking to the business which created it, it changed the nature of its product as completely as would be the case if a dealer in women's hats switched to men's shoes, expecting still to hold his old customers.

It had been offering entertainment which appealed to the imagination, and it switched to a line which appeals to the intellect. It divided its audience into the three parts set forth by Jason. For the soothing silence of its legitimate product it substituted dialogue which its players shout into the ears of the audience. For the quiet music of the old days it substituted scores which at times step to the front and stun us with the volume of their sound. And box-office receipts continue to shrink. And producers who regard themselves as supermen, incapable of being wrong, plead the difficulty of making pictures, each of which will appeal to three different kinds of audience.

It is six or seven years ago since the *Spectator* first predicted the exact conditions which exist now. If the *Spectator* could see it that long ago, why, in heaven's name, can not the film moguls with the overstuffed salaries see it now?

* * *

TIME TO THINK ABOUT SHIRLEY

THAT Shirley Temple's appeal is more to adults than to children long has been the *Spectator's* contention. The trend of the New York criticisms of her latest picture is along the same lines. Yet her studio never has even hinted at its realization of that important fact. It persists in presenting her as a child to entertain children. Perhaps the lack of satisfactory box-office response to her current vehicle will prompt her studio to do some serious thinking. At least let us hope so. A suggestion of the kind of thinking responsible for the weakness of Shirley's box-office standing is given in Louella Parson's newspaper column: "Darryl Zanuck certainly has a big problem in finding stories for the golden Temple child that appeal to the children and at the same time are adult entertainment." If Louella has Darryl right, he is

thinking in terms of his star and not in terms of her stories. He was thinking that way when he presented her, three or four pictures ago as a blackface hooper, a box-office blow from which he has not covered.

The only consideration that should be given Shirley when a story is being prepared for her is that she is ten years old, consequently a girl of about that age must be the person around whom the story revolves. The writers then should forget Shirley and concentrate on the girl in the story. If the girl part is developed logically, Shirley may be relied upon to do brilliantly on the screen everything the girl does in the script. And no matter what it is, it will entertain children. Each little girl in an audience sees herself in Shirley, and that is quite enough in itself to keep her interested in what the little actress does in the picture; and, unless it be carried to an absurd extent the more grown-up Shirley appears on the screen, the more grown-up will the girl in the audience feel, therefore writing Shirley's stories for adults is the surest way to make them entertaining for children.

* * *

YOUTH TO THE RESCUE

HOLLYWOOD was host this week to a group of people who are espousing a doctrine all the world some day will embrace. Moral Re-armament, the apt name given it, has among its disciples millions of people who have never heard of it, and millions of others who merely have heard of it and know little about it as a concrete movement. I belong in this second class. All I know about it is that its aim is to make the world a more decent place in which to live, and I am wholeheartedly for that. My impression is that the sponsors of the movement have given up hope of us old fellows ever acquiring enough sense to run things properly, and are arousing the youth of the world to a consciousness of the responsibility that will be theirs.

Certainly the elder statesmen are making a horrible mess of the world. Of that we are reminded every morning by the headlines in our newspapers. I am writing this on a Sunday morning, and a moment ago I paused to hail a neighbor and ask him if he could induce his dog to cease its practice of scraping holes under our back fence and not only coming in through them, but providing our dogs with a hitherto unsuspected method of escaping from their established boundaries and roaming the neighborhood. If I had taken a tip from the morning headlines, I would have known that my plan to abate the nuisance should have been for me to shoot my neighbor, and his would have been to fire the first shot if I were not too quick for him. But we laughed over the matter, and from where I sit now I can see him nailing some wire netting to the bottom of the fence, his dog on his side and my dogs on mine being interested onlookers.

Movement a Civilizing Instrument

I can see no fundamental difference between this fence incident and the international incidents which now are prompting nations to snarl at one another.

Each of the latter is susceptible to the same friendly settlement if it be approached with a laugh instead of with a gun. But guns will prevail until the nations become civilized. The Moral Re-armament movement can become the civilizing instrument. The sentiment of the world is on its side. Its aim is to crystalize the sentiment into a potent and irresistible force—a world-wide movement to make the world a better place to live in.

Surely there is inspiration there for a great motion picture—a theme the world would applaud—not a war theme or a plea for universal peace; just some homely, human story about ordinary people and their desire to live in a tranquil world, a picture which would condemn war by implication, expose strife as the senseless and unnecessary thing it is, and demonstrate that as the world thinks, the world will be.

* * *

FAILS AS ESCAPIST MEDIUM

THE front page of the morning paper, of course, was filled with war talk, which left room for only one column of political strife and the choicest murder of the day. Turning the page I caught some headings: "Children See Father Killed by Zoo Bear," and "Three Sisters, Arms Locked, Drown in Boat Mishap," "Murderer of Wife and Son in Wild Outburst." For relief I turned to the amusement page and my eyes met: "They took the bars off Alcatraz to film it!—'They All Come Out'—See sensational actual scenes of what really goes on in the great federal prisons!" I put the paper down, went outside, and while I worked among the flowers I wondered if, after all, the screen really is an escapist medium.

* * *

AND WHAT OF HAM-AN'-EGGS?

WHEN November 7 comes along the eyes of the nation will turn in the direction of California. On that day the state will decide if it is to make a most revolutionary experiment, whether it can pay thirty dollars each week to each of its elderly citizens without making things worse than they are now. Two classes of voters will support the measure: those who believe sincerely the pension plan will work, and those who feel something should be done to improve present conditions and are willing to make the experiment provided for in the initiative measure. Opposed to it will be two classes: those who believe sincerely it will not work, and those who are afraid it will disturb conditions which they now find advantageous to their selfish interests.

Neither the proponents of the plan nor its opponents know if it will work. Those opposed to it reflect the frame of mind of the citizens of the past century who were convinced trains running on rails would not be successful, who laughed at the idea of electricity, at Bell's dream of talking over a wire. And now we have radio and television, each more unbelievable than the thought that there must be some manner in which old people can be given financial contentment.

It will be difficult to make any thoughtful voter believe there is no remedy for existing conditions. The most earnest opponents of the pension plan will be those responsible for the conditions which made some plan necessary. The same sun, rain and earth responsible for previous periods of prosperity are still standing by, still functioning. Man is the weak spot in the scheme of things. Some believe that in the pension plan they have a way out. If those who think differently have hopes of converting the public to their belief, they should make their arguments convincing by presenting an alternate plan which will achieve the results aimed at by the Ham-and-Eggers.

* * *

CRITICS AND THEIR CRAFT

EIGHT years ago there appeared a 400-page book still read by those who take an intelligent interest in the reviews of literary works and the manner in which critics approach their discussions of music, stage, screen and the allied arts—"The Craft of the Critic," written by S. Stephenson Smith. Last evening, in reading again his estimate of screen criticism, I noted again how accurately Smith had sized up the situation as it existed a decade ago. I quote him, and leave it to you to decide for yourself if there has been any change since the book was written:

"The cinema originated as a study of the motions of a racehorse in action. Only a half-dozen of the directors have remembered this. The essential thing in the motion picture is movement. And the newspaper and magazine critics rarely recall this elementary fact. Look at those curious and venal advertising media, the movie magazines. Is there any study of the pictures as artistic sequences of motion? Anecdotal tidbits about the stars, details of directors' lives and manners, Hollywood scandals, the pirating of plots, craft details on the making of scenarios, camera technique, exclamations over the wonders of archaeology in some new historical romance, personal interviews with the stars, and endless stills well up to the level of billboard art and boulevard postcards: in short, a farrago of rubbish, so far as any intelligible criticism is concerned. The Hollywood Spectator is the one exception."

* * *

TO STIMULATE FILM BOX-OFFICES

WHEN stories are being prepared in studios, too much thought is given the stars and supporting players who are to appear in them, a practice responsible for the complaint of the public that there is too much sameness in the pictures offered it. When a star makes a hit in a certain characterization, his or her studio promptly looks for a follow-up story with a similar character in it. When an artist sets about the creation of what he hopes will be his masterpiece, he does not think solely in terms of his colors. His thoughts are on the creation as a whole, and it is the creation which dictates the colors to be used. If screen writers were permitted to think only in terms

of their stories, and if producers fitted their players into the stories instead of having the stories fashioned for their players, film theatre box-offices would be given at least a measure of the stimulation they so badly need.

* * *

MENTAL MEANDERINGS

OUR dirt road passes a corner marked by a high cypress hedge in which there are two gates providing passers-by with views of a comfortable home in a setting of well trimmed trees, attractive shrubbery and a gorgeous display of flowers. Across spacious lawns a couple of dogs chase one another, and along well kept paths one sees at times a colored maid pushing a perambulator in which sits a baby whose eyes gravely or gaily, according to her changing moods, surveys the world around her. Never farther than a dozen feet from the baby is a handsome German shepherd dog. And in such a setting and under such conditions there dwells a man who not so long ago had a number near the top of the Public Enemy list. A policeman friend of mine told me he had paid his debt to society and is now going straight. That made him interesting; the crimes he had committed took nerve and daring, marked him as a man worth studying, a human museum piece against a rural background. I took dvantage of an opportunity to make his acquaintance. That was about a year ago. He is out in my garden now, planting a few dozen zinnia plants, rare varieties he grew from seed. His greatest pride—excepting the baby, of course—is his rose garden. . . . What I thought was a flock of gophers played havoc with a bed of asters. I got a trap, set it, then hoped it would catch nothing, as I hate touching dead things. Aramantha, an old cat which ambles across our yard and spends hours with me, studied me and the trap, but for a week nothing happened. Then one morning I came upon Aramantha feasting on a gopher. The trap was still set. No sign of a gopher since. If I knew who owns Aramantha, I would trade the trap for her. . . . And now, without waiting to ask her permission, I will let a Seattle reader do the rest of today's Meandering. The opening paragraph of a letter from Maurine Coman, a Spectator subscriber who lives in the Puget Sound city, is too good to keep to myself: "The significance of your Mental Meanderings in the Spectator of June tenth is like a delicate perfume borne on a gentle breeze. Now if only the world might grasp the beautiful similitude of your neighborhood exchange and your flower children in the neighbors' gardens, and would love the neighbors' gardens for the sake of their own fair children blooming there, what a world this would be! What a neighborhood of nations, and what possible use could one find for war in universal gardens redolent with the perfume of love and righteousness? Ah, Mr. Spectator, it is a Utopian dream you have, and I, too, am only a dreamer. Of what use are dreams?"

What Late Ones Look Like

Heifetz Casts a Musical Spell

THEY SHALL HAVE MUSIC

Samuel Goldwyn-U. A.

Producer Samuel Goldwyn
Associate producer..... Robert Riskin
Director Archie Mayo
Screen play: Irmgard Von Cube, John Howard Lawson.
Photography Gregg Toland
Musical director..... Alfred Newman
Film editor..... Sherman Todd
Cast: Jascha Heifetz, Andrea Leeds, Joel McCrea, Gene Reynolds, Walter Brennan, Porter Hall, Terry Kilburn, Walter Tetley, Chuck Stubbs, Tommy Kelly, Jacqueline Nash, Alfred Newman, Mary Ruth, John St. Polis, Alexander Schonberg, Marjorie Main, Arthur Hohl, Paul Harvey, "Zero," Peter Meremblum California Junior Symphony. Running time, 120 minutes.

Reviewed by Bert Harlen

A DELIGHTFUL picture. *They Shall Have Music* is one of the few films that give the spectator something to carry away from the theatre with him, a raising of the spirit. What one takes from the picture, of course, will be dependent on what he brings to it, especially with respect to musical appreciation, and yet, produced with astute showmanship, the picture has something for everyone.

The presentation should do exceptionally well at the box-office because it will bring into motion picture houses, to see and hear the great Jascha Heifetz, sections of the public that rarely visit film houses. At the same time, the picture affords a finely human, touching story which will absorb those with no pronounced ear for better music.

More important than the box-office returns of this single picture, however, is the fact that, by its presentation of high artistic values, it will further increase the appreciation of finer filmic elements, helping to pave the way for pictures of wider and more enduring appeal.

Presents Musical Feast

¶ Heifetz, starred in the Goldwyn production, dominates the picture largely through his playing, being heard in a generous number of selections. What he gives us is a feast of music seldom equaled on the screen. His numbers range from the highly technical *Rondo Capriccioso* of Saint Saens to the simple and tender little *Estrellita*.

It is probable that Dr. Bruno Ussher will have a great deal to say on the technical merits of the renditions, so I shall not impose my far less discerning reactions, except to say that, to me, they were superb. What will most impress the layman is the spirit and poignancy

of his playing. Those few of the music world who have been prone to consider Heifetz's playing at times deficient in emotional stimulus—though likely a misinterpretation—manifestly can have no criticism on that score here. The music is rich in feeling, and doubtless gains in that respect through associations with the story. Stretches of the background music evidently are played by the violinist himself.

Recording, under the supervision of Paul Neal, is of exceptional quality. On occasion it seemed to me that the reproduction was too loud, especially in forte passages in the upper register, but this detraction in all likelihood was due to the sound control at the Warners' Beverly theatre, the brethren's local film houses seemingly having a penchant for excess of this kind.

He Sticks to His Music

¶ Sam Goldwyn has shown wisdom in depending on the violinist's musical performances to impress his personality on audiences, rather than featuring him prominently in the dramatic portions of the play. Heifetz is seen in only two brief dialogue sequences. Apparently painstakingly coached by Director Archie Mayo, he is natural and easy. Thus our respect for the musician is unimpaired by any inept exhibitions in an alien art, which has not always been the case in other appearances of musical celebrities.

Shrewdness is shown too in the admixture of fictional and musical elements. The screen play by Irmgard Von Cube and John Howard Lawson is full of human touches and spiced with just a dash of hokum—the incident where the menace is subtly jabbed in the posterior by the hat pin of an aroused housewife, is capital—and yet the story is never mundane or trivial; it is founded on aspirations and splendid ideals, and definitely centers about music, dealing with the efforts of a music school, where poor children may study without charge, to keep open its doors and save its instruments from creditors, following the death of its patron.

Child Musicians Featured

¶ At this point it should be interjected that the musical program of this very musical film is by no means contributed solely by Heifetz. Seen and heard, as music pupils of the impecunious school, are members of an admirable organization of child musicians, our own California Junior Symphony Orchestra, fostered and trained by Peter Meremblum. It is said that Heifetz refused to believe the players were children when he first heard a recording of their work. At the

conclusion of the picture the violinist does a Mendelssohn concerto to the accompaniment of the Meremblum orchestra. The seasoned Alfred Newman is at the baton throughout the picture.

Then there is little Jacqueline Nash, heard in two vocal selections, displaying a voice of extraordinary range and timbre for one so young. Deserving a laurel too, is tiny Mary Ruth, whose fingers move along the keyboard as though directed by a force far older than she—and possibly they are. The Chopin *Minute Waltz* may hold snares for such small fingers, but a slight muffing or two does not render the performance less than notable.

Thespians Are First-rate

¶ This seems an unbefitting time to be coming to the thespians, for the acting performances contribute a large part of the film's effectiveness. Outstanding in the cast is young Gene Reynolds, as a waif who finds a haven and the recognition and training of a latent musical gift at the school. The boy has some scenes with an impressive spiritual quality, and others of considerable dramatic force.

That young-old man, Walter Brennan, again comes through with an excellent characterization, playing the elderly founder and director of the institution, so absorbed in music he is unaware of the school's financial straits. Andrea Leeds is quietly effective as his daughter, and Joel McCrea is at his best as her suitor. Young Terry Kilburn, Porter Hall, and Marjorie Main are among others doing good work in a cast too lengthily for individual mention.

Archie Mayo in his direction has fully realized the human values in the script, bringing forth earnest and vivid work from the players.

Heifetz Technique Revealed

¶ Production, needless to say, is of the high Goldwyn level. Gregg Toland's photography, especially in capturing the Heifetz technique through close-up shots from various angles, is commendable, and art direction by James Basevi is a meritorious contribution. Editing must have presented many problems, particularly in the musical sequences, but Sherman Todd has met them skilfully.

The only faulty bit of continuity, due probably to the screen play, though editing might have helped it, unfortunately mars the conclusion of the picture. Miss Leeds is shown embracing her father in an endeavor to console him at seeing the instruments taken away in the midst of the big school concert, while the next shot shows Heifetz alighting from his automobile in front. Then he is heard playing off

scene, while Miss Leeds is still embracing her father. For the musician to have come in and made preparations to play would have taken at least four or five minutes, and a father-daughter embrace would not have lasted that long. A retake, if necessary, would be a good investment.

A praiseworthy contribution to the raising of artistic values in motion pictures, and a musical feast such as seldom is to be seen in film houses. The thousands of music students throughout the country will find valuable instruction in being able to study the technique of the master violinist, Jascha Heifetz, at close range. Performances by younger musicians in the picture, including a children's symphony orchestra, should inspire other talented youngsters. Students of cinematography can observe a clever admixture of musical and fictional elements, especially as related to the need of providing sufficient dramatic values for that portion of the public with uncultivated musical tastes. The extensive possibilities for library book and film cooperation are patent.

Adopts Technique of Stong's Novel

CAREER, RKO

Producer	Robert Sisk
Production executive	Lee Marcus
Director	Leigh Jason
Screen play	Dalton Trumbo
Adaptation	Bert Granet
From the novel by	Phil Stong
Musical director	Russell Bennett
Photographer	Frank Redman, ASC
Special effects	Vernon L. Walker, ASC
Recording	John L. Cass
Editor	Arthur E. Roberts

Cast: Anne Shirley, Edward Ellis, Samuel S. Hinds, Janet Beecher, Leon Errol, Alice Eden, John Archer, Raymond Hatton, Maurice Murphy, Harrison Greene, Charles Drake, Hobart Cavanaugh. Running time, 62 minutes.

Reviewed by Bert Harlen

THERE is some good stuff in *Career*. There was good stuff in the Phil Stong novel, which pictured a cross section of Iowan small town life, centering about a young man who comes to know, as had his father, that "there are two women in every man's life, the one he lost and the one he thanks God he got."

Structurally the picture adheres closely to the plotting of the book, adaptation being by Bert Granet, the screen play itself by Dalton Trumbo. Why the middle man, is a matter in which your guess is as good as mine. Be that as it may, the film embodies the technique of the novel to a greater extent than is commonly to be seen in motion pictures.

Greater Selection Required

Most of the picture's shortcomings, as I see it, come from this treatment of

the story material. Hergesheimer has dubbed the novel the "grab bag" of literature. Certainly there are no exacting principles of structure or content behind the form; some of the best have been part essay or what have you. Now, though one is getting on thin ice when he says dogmatically what may or may not go into either a stage play or a screen play, I think it can safely be affirmed, as a principle, that the better screen plays favor the structure characteristic of stage plays, with respect to emphasis, proportion and the like.

The most irrelevant item in the picture is the carrying on of two habitual drunkards. Their prolonged horseplay at a Fourth of July picnic, during which one falls off a high bridge, advanced the story in no way. The drunken episodes, however, will cause many persons, especially parents, to view the film with disfavor, when they might otherwise have commended it.

Denouement Is High Spot

On the other hand, the thread of the story which gives the film most of its significance and emotional appeal could stand a good deal more elaboration—the conflict the young man experiences between his love for the girl and his desire to fulfill his ambition to be a great scientist, the fellow having an unusual ability.

The semi-tragic denouement is the high spot of the picture. There is a memorable quality to the scene where the young man, choked with emotion, sits on the banister of the front porch and looks off into the night, as he hears the train whistle which means the girl he loves is being taken out of his life, to become the bride of another. The father comes out just long enough to tell the boy about the two women in a man's life, speaking from his own experience, and then goes back in.

Anne Shirley Impresses

Other stretches of mature dialogue constitute the best feature of Trumbo's screen play. A speech the boy's father delivers before an irate mob, come to his house bent on trouble, has eloquence and meaning, and Edward Ellis gives it impressively.

Already having established herself as one of the screen's outstanding emotional actresses, Anne Shirley should find further favor with audiences in her performance of the girl who comes to realize there is an insurmountable barrier between herself and the young man of her fancy—his living in a different mental world—a performance of delicacy and thoughtfulness. I would chide her gently for succumbing to the lure of the standardized long eyelashes, though they were evident, from what I could observe, only in the opening scene.

As the young man John Archer has some scenes of considerable sincerity

and depth. For an initial screen assignment, and a big one, it can be said that he does very well, albeit signs of inexperience peep out here and there. His voice has uncommon resonance, but needs greater tonal variation.

Supporting Players Competent

Another contest winner, Alice Eden, had too brief a part to get a just estimate of her capability, though evidently she can stand considerable coaching. Janet Beecher, Samuel S. Hinds, Leon Errol and Raymond Hatton are well cast.

Leigh Jason has given sensitive direction to numerous scenes, is inclined to be heavy of touch at other times.

Scenic and photographic elements enhance the picture. The documentary shots, with vocal commentary, of the corn and sheep and other characteristics of Iowa, however, adds nothing to the story, which establishes its own background satisfactorily.

One with some ideas and moments of outstanding emotional poignancy, though the film is not in all respects top-notch fare. Family audiences especially should like it, except for some prolonged and unnecessary episodes of drunkenness.

Tamiroff Displays Technical Skill

THE MAGNIFICENT FRAUD, Paramount

Producer	Harlan Thompson
Director	Robert Florey
Screen play	Gilbert Gabriel, Walter Ferris
Original	Charles G. Booth
Photography	William Mellor
Film editor	James Smith
Music director	Philip Boutelje

Cast: Akim Tamiroff, Lloyd Nolan, Mary Boland, Patricia Morison, Ralph Forbes, Steffi Duna, Ernest Cossart, George Zucco, Robert Warwick, Frank Reicher, Robert Middlemass, Abner Biberman, Donald Gallagher. Running time, 75 minutes.

Reviewed by Bert Harlen

ENDEAVORING to disentangle the intricate entwining of good and bad elements of a production like *The Magnificent Fraud*, weigh them in the balance, and arrive at a fair estimate of the picture's total worth, is one of the things that occasions the critic silver threads among the gold.

The personal equation will play a good part in the spectator's reception of this film. If very romantic in outlook, he may be intrigued by the unusual turn of events; if dominantly a realist, he will find considerable to criticize. About an extremely gifted actor who, with crape hair, paint, and putty, replaces the president of a mythical South American republic when the man is assassinated by a bomb explosion, the deceit being engineered by other political

figures, since a loan of some millions of dollars from American financiers is in the offing, the piece probably will place a heavy strain on the sense of credibility of most persons.

Nothing Wrong With Hokum

¶ "But don't you think a certain amount of hokum is a good thing in motion pictures? Limiting story material to the wholly plausible would make for unoriginality and dryness, would it not?" wondered the charming young person who honored me with her company on my trek to the Village.

"Hokum is great stuff," I opined, "—if you can get away with it."

Molnar's *The Guardsman* presented a similar situation, in which an actor masquerades as a dashing Russian to test his wife's fidelity, and no one criticized the play on the score of plausibility. The figures prancing in the clock at the conclusion of *The Awful Truth* was grand hokum. In my opinion, however, *The Magnificent Fraud* does not get away with it. Why it does not is a matter tied up with purpose and viewpoint in the story material.

Portrayals Impressive

¶ The picture is made to serve as an out-and-out tour de force for Akim Tamiroff. Unquestionably his performance as the presidential impersonator, together with two dramatic sketches in which he essays Cyrano de Bergerac and Napoleon, and poster portraits of King Lear and Henry VIII, definitely establishes Tamiroff as a brilliant technician, perhaps the foremost on the screen. The make-ups, the gestures, the intonations, are done with master strokes.

Observe, though, that I have specified "technician." It is unfortunate that the actor's greatest opportunity should come in a role which, by its very nature, precludes that personal give between actor and audience, that flow of sympathy which is the core of theatre.

Again, Genre Trouble

¶ Other performers have fared but little better in this respect. There is artifice clinging to the whole thing, growing out of the screen play and, to some extent, the direction.

It would seem that neither the screen play scriptists, Gilbert Gabriel and Walter Ferris, nor Director Robert Florey had too sure an idea as to just what they wanted to do with the material. What the original story was like, *Cavare For His Excellency*, by Charles G. Booth, I am unable to say. But it would be to the advantage of the screen material to have been couched definitely in a genre of melodrama, comedy, or drama.

Stretches of the dialogue have a rather admirable succinctness, especially in early expository portions. And it must be conceded that the writers have resorted to considerable device to make the presidential masquerade seem plausible.

Amorous scenes between Lloyd Nolan and Patricia Morison, on the other hand, are stilted and slushy. Too, story movement lags now and then.

Paging Mister Hays

¶ Nolan, good trouser, does everything he can with his role of a dashing and somewhat rascally American opportunist who has inserted himself into local politics, though he is not ideal casting for the part—not to suggest that the role is any plum. Patricia Morison has a striking comeliness, but plainly needs more experience.

Mary Boland does effective trouping, though her performance ranges in key all the way from farce, at the beginning, to serious drama at the close. Miss Boland, by the by, is the only person, it develops, who was not taken in by the deceit, having enjoyed an amour with the president some years before and, to all appearances, having resumed it with his impersonator. Catch on?

Another element of the risque is contributed by the dancing of Steffi Duna, an impassioned and wholly torrid exhibition, almost too much so for a warm night. Mister Hays must be slipping. And to think they censored Claudette Colbert's cancan.

If Hans Dreier and Ernst Fegte intended to add an air of fantasy to their palace sets, they succeeded fully, since the appointments are very la-de-da. William Mellor's photography, Phil Boutelje's music, Edith Head's costumes and other technical contributions are pleasant.

Part of the magnificence of the fraud, it might be said, comes from the dramatic climax he contrives for his presidential role, in which he makes a sacrifice which renders him, ironically, a hero in fact—a good twist.

Impersonations by Akim Tamiroff, done with master strokes, are highly interesting, but many picture-goers would find the story one in which they could place little credence. Some slushy love scenes and other elements make it not the best entertainment for children, if indeed they would find it eventful enough.

Blondie Picture Has Airy Spirit

BLONDIE TAKES A VACATION, Columbia
Producer Robert Sparks
Director Frank R. Strayer
Photography Henry Freulich
Film editor Viola Lawrence
Cast: Penny Singleton, Arthur Lake, Larry
Simms, Daisy, Danny Mummert, Donald
Meek, Donald MacBride, Thomas W. Ross,
Elizabeth Dunne, Robert Wilcox, Harlan
Briggs, Irving Bacon. Running time, 68 min

Reviewed by Bert Harlen

THIS new one of the *Blondie* series should take the fancy of the family trade as readily as have the earlier pic-

tures. And even those picture-goers who do not generally favor the lower budget productions should be taken in by the unusual qualities of the show—airiness, youthfulness, buoyancy.

In a key of broad farce is the story, so much so, in fact, that one wonders if a little more emphasis on human values would not have been to the picture's advantage. There is some good fun in the tomfoolery, however. The screen play, by Richard Flournoy from a story by perhaps too many people, has the shortcoming of a climax which leaves Blondie and Dagwood on the sidelines, the center of interest being little Baby Dumppling and another, which makes the conclusion seem a little premature. The vacationing couple lead an eventful existence up till then, though.

Baby Very Bright

¶ Dialogue is racy and witty in a broad sort of way. Some of the best lines fall to little Larry Simms, as Baby Dumppling, and he delivers them in a fetching way. The infant, it seems, has become so precocious that he views the foibles of his parents with a resigned tolerance and, on occasion, something very near to superciliousness. There is humor in this situation, but also a certain danger; when infants become too knowing and critical, we think of the hairbrush.

Penny Singleton and Arthur Lake are in good fettle in their parts. Donald Meek makes the most of his role of a weak-minded old fellow with an overfondness for playing with matches, and young Danny Mummert, Donald MacBride and others are seen to advantage.

Frank Strayer's direction fully realizes, and probably augments, the humor and sparkle in the script. His sympathetic handling of Daisy is especially notable, a highly expert performance being given by the talented canine.

Henry Freulich's photography and the art direction of Lionel Banks are important factor in the agreeable at-important factors in the agreeable at-

Its buoyancy and the likeableness of its characters make it enjoyable entertainment of the unpretentious kind. The story is broadly farcical, but you should have no trouble in abandoning yourself to it.

Mimeographing
Multigraphing

JEANNE EDWARDS

1655 North Cherokee
(at Hollywood Blvd.)
GRanite 0330

Character Study

Lacking in Study

I STOLE A MILLION, Universal

Producer Burt Kelly
Director Frank Tuttle
Screen play Nathanael West
Photography Milton Krasner
Film editor Ed Curtiss
Music director Charles Previn

Cast: George Raft, Claire Trevor, Dick Foran, Henry Armetta, Victor Jory, Joe Sawyer, Robert Elliot, Tom Fadden, John Hamilton, Stanley Ridges, George Chandler, Mary Forbes, Phil Tead, Wallis Clark, Irving Bacon, Hobart Cavanaugh, John Butler, Mira McKinney, Jerry Marlowe, Jason Robards, Claire Whitney, Sarah Padden, Harold Minjir, Ed Chandler, Frances Morris, Mary Foy, Edmund MacDonald, Constance Romanoff, Lee Murray, Ernie Adams, Al Hill, Hal K. Dawson, Henry Roquemore, Mike Lally, Jim O'Gatty.

Reviewed by Bert Harlen

HOW is a desperado born? Well, it's like dis, kids—a fellow tries to be an all right guy, see? But them coppers jist won't leave him alone, keep followin' him up, even when he has married a swell skoit and settled down in a little joint where he goes to choich ever Sunday and has built a garage into a dandy business. Dey jist won't forgit t'ings. Well, maybe de guy was a little hot-headed and stubborn and tried too much to do t'ings his own way instead of de law's way, but inside he has a heart of gold, see? He ain't really like most criminals.

Well, de foist t'ing you know, bein' treaded like dis, de guy is holdin' up post offices and mail trains. Dat's de way it goes. See?

Generous With Excitements

¶ Having hinted at the spirit and developments of *I Stole a Million*, allow me to dispense with the jargon—it is too much trouble to write. Purporting to be a character study of an individual during his degeneration from taxi driver to desperado, the film in reality is just another gangster tale, with the usual generous emphasis on gun play, automobile chases and sundry excitements.

Universal has published an attractive little booklet, in which characters of the story, opposite their photographs, express divergent interpretations of Joe's character, and from these analyses it would seem that somebody at one time or another had some ideas which might have been the basis for a film of considerable significance. But the place for interpretation is on the screen, not in a booklet.

Should Thrill the Goils

¶ Perhaps the script gave George Raft little to start with in the way of a character, but evidently he has not placed himself under any strain in trying to work out a dimensional characteriza-

tion. The player's sensuous-eyed episodes will doubtless thrill his Eighth Avenue feminine contingent and their counterparts elsewhere, however, and that was probably the primary purpose behind the production at the beginning.

Claire Trevor does good trouping. Her diction and demeanor seem a trifle elegant in view of the background this character was supposed to have, but perhaps I am being hypercritical, since such details are considered trivial in contemporary film production.

Encore For Jory

¶ Dick Foran gives a thoughtful performance, and Victor Jory does well also, cast as a criminal. We should see more of him. Tom Fadden and one or two others are capable.

Art direction, supervised by Jack Otterson, is an attribute, and Milton Krasner's photography is standard.

Frank Tuttle directed.

Another gangster story.

Sandy Engenders Waves of "Cutes"

UNEXPECTED FATHER, Universal

Producer Ken Goldsmith
Director Charles Lamont
Screen play:: Leonard Spigelgass, Charles Grayson.
Photography George Robinson
Film editor Ted Kent
Musical direction Charles Previn
Cast: Sandy Lee, Shirley Ross, Dennis O'Keefe, Mischa Auer, Joy Hodges, Dorothy Arnold, Anne Gwynne, Anne Nagel, Donald Briggs, Richard Lane, Paul Guilfoyle, Mayo Methot, Jane Darwell, Spencer Charter, Ygor and Tanya. Running time, 73 minutes.

Reviewed by Bert Harlen

THOSE with maternal or paternal feelings—and who hasn't one or the other, more or less?—will find much gratification in *Unexpected Father*, in which the blond and cooing Baby Sandy disports. The baby is a captivating tot. A wave of "cutes" from the preview audience attended each of his grimaces.

Moreover, Sandy is a craftsman who could teach many of his elder colleagues a thing or two about screen acting. He feels everything intensely, never overplays, resorts to no artifices of make-up, is the most subtle and natural of actors.

I do hope Miss Sandy will forgive my misapplication of gender: he is—that is, she is—that good an impersonator.

Involves Back-Stage Life

¶ Several incidents of the story seem just a bit forced, but the tailor-made screen play for starring Sandy is not a bad concoction. Centering about theatre life, it provides back-stage glamour and opportunity for a couple of dance numbers to bolster up sagging moments.

Movement as a whole, however, is pretty good. Leonard Spigelgass and Charles Grayson did it.

An entertainer and his girl friend, of the chorus, take the infant under their wing, following the death of its parents in an automobile accident, the child's mother having been a former dancing partner of the young man. Before the close of the story nearly everybody in the cast is willing to marry someone, when it is believed the authorities intend to place the baby in an orphanage, in view of the absence of a domestic establishment among the devoted denizens of the theatre world. The entertainer and his girl friend have become estranged.

Climax Is Exciting

¶ A breathless climax reminiscent of the old Harold Lloyd stunting comes about when the baby crawls out on the ledge of a high building. There were actual shrieks in the audience when Mischa Auer, in pursuit, falls off.

Players in support of the youthful star are in good fettle, and include Shirley Ross, individual and charming; Dennis O'Keefe, gingery; and the aforementioned Mischa Auer, broad but funny. Paul Guilfoyle and Mayo Methot characterize effectively a pair of rough-necks. A dance team, Ygor and Tanya, are in the sensational class in the acrobatic dance field.

Posies are due Charles Lamont, director, for his coaxing or scheming or both to get the reactions from Baby Sandy.

Jack Otterson's art direction, George Robinson's photography, Charles Previn's musical supervision, and the gowns of Vera West are assets.

Centers about the captivating Baby Sandy, with back-stage life and some dance specialties thrown in. Acceptable entertainment of the popular sort.

It Introduces a Clever Comic

MILLION DOLLAR LEGS, Paramount

Associate producer William C. Thomas
Director Nick Grinde
Assistant director Joseph Lefert
Screen play Lewis R. Foster, Richard English
Original Lewis R. Foster
Photography Harry Fischbeck
Film editor Arthur Schmidt
Cast: Betty Grable, John Hartley, Donald O'Connor, Jackie Coogan, Dorothea Kent, Joyce Mathews, Peter Hayes, Larry Crabbe, Richard Denning, Phillip Warren, Edward Arnold, Jr., Thurston Hall, Roy Gordon, Matty Kemp, William Tracy. Running time, 63 minutes.

Reviewed by Bert Harlen

THERE is really but one reason for reviewing *Million Dollar Legs*, since you have already seen the picture many, many, many times before. Better add another "many." It is a college picture

and this time the sport is crew racing—formula 2d in the little blue book.

The one reason, let me hasten to elucidate, is that the offering serves to introduce to picture audiences a certain Peter Hayes, a young man with very unusual gifts as a comedian.

We Begin At Beginning

¶ With your indulgence, however, I shall begin at the beginning of my impression of the chap's ability. One night some weeks ago I stayed on to see the stage show following a preview at the Paramount theatre. Onto the stage came a young fellow nattily attired in a white Palm Beach suit, loaded with poise, flashing an expansive smile, and generally exuding class with the capital "A." Following an agreeable turn of song, he went into his principal offering, a series of impersonations of everyone from Rudy Vallee to Lionel Barrymore. Well, the lad wowed 'em, to borrow a figure from the parlance of variety. They clapped and whistled for more; and this in a house where, its stage presentations now on too low a production budget, I have seen eggs laid—to borrow another figure from variety—the size of dinosaurs'. Or did dinosaurs lay eggs?

Anyway, the fellow's wit, his salty sense of caricature, his ear for the reproduction of tonal values, and his range of vocal effects and gestures were remarkable.

Has Exceptional Potentialities

¶ Being a firm believer in the adage about a beaten track to one's door if he can do anything uncommonly well, I predicted then that we would soon be hearing from the chap in a larger way. And here he is with a fat part in the "moom pictures."

Hayes brings with him his bounteous bag of tricks. There is something fascinating in his constantly and widely varied assaults of vocal effects, gestures, and facial play. That he gives a characterization, I will not vouch for—though his role, of course, was written merely as a gag part. Still, he might have been a little more selective with his tricks. Moreover, much of what he does needs some modification for cinematic purposes; it is a bit too physical and too broad. And yet he takes every scene in which he appears, fills the screen with animation, humor, and warmth. The actor has exceptional potentialities. He needs more sophisticated story material, however.

Do Drop Us a Card

¶ The others are all right, including Betty Grable, though she screams some of her lines, John Hartley, Donald O'Connor, Jackie Coogan, and others.

His directorial assignment called for no subtlety, and Nick Grinde has not bothered to impose any.

If you are a college student who wears loud clothes, never even speaks of a book, spends most of the waking hours bouncing about and yelling or stewing over fraternity pins or athletic teams, by all means see the film, as you will convulse over the humor, and work yourself into hysteria at the climax. Only, if you are such a person, do drop me a post card and I shall spend my next vacation looking you up. I have never seen such a creature.

Another college yarn, centering this time about crew racing. You know the rest. Except that the picture introduces a clever young comedian who will bear watching, the name, Peter Hayes.

About Some One's Killing Somebody

NEWS IS MADE AT NIGHT, 20th-Fox

Executive producer..... Sol M. Wurtzel
Producer..... Edward Kaufman
Director..... Alfred Werker
Original screen play..... John Larkin
Photography..... Ernest Palmer
Film editor..... Nick De Maggio
Musical direction..... Samuel Kaylin
Cast: Preston Foster, Lynn Bari, Russell Gleason, George Barbier, Eddie Collins, Minor Watson, Charles Halton, Paul Harvey, Richard Lane, Charles Lane, Betty Compson, Paul Fix, Paul Guilfoyle. Running time, 70 minutes.

Reviewed by Bert Harlen

NOT a bad B show. The picture is slow in gaining our interest, largely because the exposition is rather clumsy, but once under way it presents some suspenseful situations and provocative comedy touches. The story is principally about newspaper people, about a managing editor and a comely feminine reporter who suspect that a man facing the lethal gas chamber, convicted of murder, is really innocent, and that someone else shot somebody for some reason or other, a band of gangsters and a mysterious underworld boss figuring in the pernicious enterprise. I am not too sure yet about this primary circumstance.

Possibly it is explained clearly enough if one is alert, but audience alertness cannot be assumed. In good screen writing the identity of characters and their relationships should be evident however passive the attitude of the spectator. The attention of any audience is something which must be won. It grows along with interest in the story, and interest is dependent on our familiarity with the characters and situations. Screen audiences are more attracted by what they see than what they hear.

Has Jaunty Air

¶ The saving grace of the film is the humor which Author John Larkin has injected into it. Apparently perceiving the importance of the comedy values,

Alfred Werker has played them up capably in his direction, probably improvising a bit, with the result that the piece acquires at times a very jaunty spirit. A scene in which an actor, hired to impersonate a dying gangster, loses his putty nose, though preposterous, is capital buffoonery.

Preston Foster plays with his usual vigor and conviction. On reflection, I have not seen him give other than a good show. Lynn Bari is spritely and attractive as the heroine, and Eddie Collins stands out with his clowning. Russell Gleason, George Barbier, and Minor Watson are well cast.

Newspaper Office Disagreeable

¶ On the production side, Ernest Palmer has provided some dramatic photographic effects, an especially good one being a crane shot, which swoops down on a prisoner isolated in a square cage in the middle of a large room, being under individual guard. Sets and back-grounds are agreeable.

Adding no appeal to the picture is the atmosphere it attributes to a newspaper office. Newspaper people, it seems, work in an environment of incessant bickering, rudeness, and authoritative reprehension.

Standard B entertainment, but nothing more. A mystery yarn, it is slow to gain interest, but some of the laughs are substantial. Not objectionable for the children.

Rooney Coins Laughs in Domestic Comedy

ANDY HARDY GETS SPRING FEVER, MGM

Director..... W. S. Van Dyke
Screen play..... Kay Van Riper
Characters..... Aurania Rouverol
Musical score..... Edward Ward, David Snell
Recording director..... Douglas Shearer
Art director..... Cedric Gibbons
Associate art director..... Stan Rogers
Set decorations..... Edwin B. Willis
Film editor..... Ben Lewis
Cast: Lewis Stone, Mickey Rooney, Cecilia Parker, Fay Holden, Ann Rutherford, Sara Haden, Helen Gilbert, Terry Kilburn, John T. Murray, George Breakston, Charles Peck, Sidney Miller, Addison Richards, Olaf Hytten, Erville Alderson, Robert Kent. Running time, 87 minutes.

Reviewed by George Turner

TO THOROUGHLY understand the appeal of domestic comedy, if for no other reason, one should see this picture. The old apothegm, "How true that is!" applies to much of the characterization, as one might expect. But in a play packed with laughs, any layman can appreciate the role direction has in paving the way and bringing out to best advantage spoken lines, and this first of the Hardy family series to be directed by W. S. Van Dyke pays tribute in de-

tail to his judgment. It is excellent entertainment.

The cast has done a noble job—showing the advantage of previous working together in parts individually contrasting, clear-cut and well comprehended; and this seventh of the Hardy series has story value, however familiar its main situations, for the play moves without dull moments and provides as fine a vehicle for that talented youngster, Mickey Rooney, as can well be conceived.

New Player Does Well

¶ It deals primarily with the adolescent susceptibility of the sixteen-year-old for his new dramatic teacher, some years older; in balance being the business worries of Judge Hardy, who has induced friends to invest in a deal which proves crooked. The teacher is portrayed by Helen Gilbert, recently a cello player in the MGM orchestra. It is her first picture, and the role, difficult as it is, reveals Miss Gilbert as a promising actress. Seldom does one see a bit of nuance so well handled, for example, as in the opening school scene where, while addressing her class, the teacher becomes conscious of the amorous regard of Mickey. Throughout the play, Miss Gilbert acts with a refinement and restraint that relieve the main situation of that which could easily become repellent and cheap.

Andy (Mickey) is studying *Romeo and Juliet*, and barely over his rebuff by Polly Benedict (Ann Rutherford), he remarks, "I used to think that kissing Polly Benedict was more important than Shakespeare"—providing one of the heartiest laughs of the show. He confides his affliction to his father (Lewis Stone), who is expressively tolerant. The presentation of Mickey's play, where the jilted Tahitian lass (Ann Rutherford) jumps into a volcano as a climax, and Mickey in an admiral's uniform forgets his lines upon discovering that his adored teacher has a lover, is a rollicking sequence near the end of the play.

Takes Farcical Turn

¶ Throughout are pardonable exaggerations of realism, verging close to farce comedy at times. But dialogue cleverness and an established sympathy for the characters compensate. The most vivid patron of costumed historical romance can scarcely fail to enter into the spirit of this type of domestic comedy, which cannot be judged by drab, artificial offerings of the past. It vindicates the long appeal of radio family stories, adding that brilliancy and intimacy which only visualized scenes can supply. Its acting requirements in many phases seem actually greater than in more grandiloquent portrayals. Kay Van Riper's dialogue habitually meets the situation and sparkles.

Lewis Stone, as Judge Hardy, is all that can be desired, and Ann Rutherford, as Polly Benedict, is archly expressive at all times. She is to appear as Scarlet O'Hara's younger sister in *Gone With the Wind*.

Universal appeal, and particularly gratifying to women and youngsters, and all who enjoy domestic situations. From a study angle there is much to observe in build-up, contrast, movement and balance.

Forty Years of Film Dash by in Review

Reviewed by George Turner

MORE than forty years of motion picture history is briefly sketched in this interestingly reminiscent showing, which, for those who did not see the first crude beginnings, provides many a chuckle. But it is worth bearing in mind that the early flickers had as much thrill in one way as our super-spectacles have in another, and there were change and progress and many a big surprise to keep them popular.

From the famous kissing couple of 1896, recognizable as May Irwin and John C. Rice, to an actual cinema play, *The Great Train Robbery*, of 1903, is a stupendous stride. The hurling of the dummy from the speeding train after the death-dealing struggle was not a laugh thirty-six years ago, despite its unlikeliest appearance. Youngsters today will find it hard to believe it was not intended as burlesque. The same is true of much else in the sagas of film-dom. Among the glimpsed milestones are *Tillie's Punctured Romance* with Marie Dressler and Chaplin; on to *The Birth of a Nation*, 1913, which introduces Lillian Gish in this first feature-length picture and immortalizes D. W. Griffith, producer. Then the birth of western serials, showing Bill Hart gaming and shooting; the Mack Sennett and Theda Bara era, Mary Garden in *Thais*; then the '20s—Rudolph Valentino in *The Sheik*, Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., in *Robin Hood*, where vast scenic interiors loomed upon an astonished public; *The Big Parade*.

Good-bye to silent pictures. Al Jolson appears in *The Jazz Singer*; another jump to *All Quiet on the Western Front*, and we leap to Paul Muni in *Emile Zola*. In this panorama of years we have caught sight of other familiars: Ben Turpin, Renee Adoree, John Gilbert, Karl Dane, Will Rogers, Diana Wynward, Greta Garbo—some of these never to be seen again, and the *March of Time* sets us thinking in a different mood than usual.

Potentates of the industry are viewed in their offices: Hays, Joe Green, censor; de Mille, the Schencks, Zanuck, Harry Warner, and the famed inventor, de Forest. Would that there might have been a shot of Edison at work on the first "moving picture" at Orange, New Jersey.

Some twenty-five principal scenes are given throughout the program, and they come from the New York Museum of Modern Art, which is said to house the only complete collection of productions. The historical review looks forward in the mention of Chaplin's *The Dictator* and *Gone With the Wind*, both long in preparation, and John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*, for which Zanuck has paid \$75,000. With such rations time indeed marches on.

Gleason Family in Well Directed One

SHOULD HUSBANDS WORK. Republic

Associate producer Sol C. Siegel
Director Gus Meins
Original screen play: Jack Townley, Taylor Caven.

Photographer Jack Marta
Film editor William Morgan
Art director John Victor Mackay
Musical director Cy Feuer

Cast: James Gleason, Lucile Gleason, Russell Gleason, Harry Davenport, Marie Wilson, Mary Hart, Tommy Ryan, Berton Churchill, Henry Kolker, Arthur Hoyt, Barry Norton, Mary Forbes, William Brisbane, Harry Bradley.

Reviewed by Tom Miranda

THE laugh-provoking Gleason family take us through another series of hilarious episodes in the lives of a scenarist's idea of a typical midwest home, in this well-directed and most capably acted film from Republic studios.

Harry Davenport, as "Dad" scores heavily in an exaggerated portrayal of Mr. and Mrs. Midwest's average grandpa, and keeps the audience highly amused by his moronic antics.

A Tip to Ambitious Wives

¶ The highlights of the film are too numerous to mention. One, however, which should cause all ambitious wives who see the film to hesitate and ponder well the situation before attempting to solve their husbands' problems, is where Lucille Gleason takes a hand.

Her husband has been summoned before a board of directors to qualify for the managership of a new cosmetic manufacturing plant. Through the insane habits of "Dad," said husband awakes from his night's sleep in the family trailer on the shore of a lake in the mountains the morning of his appointment. His wife, hoping to save his face, forces herself into the presence of the assembled board of directors, and

(Continued on page 11)

Film Music and Its Makers

BY
BRUNO DAVID USSHER

THE title *They Shall Have Music* is a decidedly appropriate one for the latest Goldwyn picture, in which Jascha Heifetz "plays himself" and his Stradivarius on a large scale. Not intending any innuendo, I feel that the title of this film is as significant as the qualities of the picture. Goldwyn may not have purposed to make a picture propagandizing the right of every child to an early opportunity in musical training, nevertheless he has done so. And he has done it splendidly.

If I say that the story, the filmization or the playing of Jascha Heifetz never caused me one beat of piercing heartache, not one moment of throat stricture, not a drop of eye moisture, then the reader should take this as a purely personal reaction. No one should miss *They Shall Have Music*, although it does not possess that inner urgency and genuine emotional excitement and elation which distinguished the musical and histrionic-dramatic elements in *One Hundred Men and a Girl*. But the race is a close one.

Splendid Achievement

¶ This Goldwyn picture is a splendid musical achievement in itself, apart from its general human or social implications. To have induced Jascha Heifetz to come out of his music-aristocratic shell of necessary isolation and play before a photographic sound camera, that alone entitles Samuel Goldwyn to world-wide thanks. It is useless to lament the absence of a sound-film record recording Beethoven playing, Wagner conducting, and so on. *Moonlight Sonata* with Paderewski had decided shortcomings, yet I will be one of the first to see and hear it again, although I found it impossible to sit through the last recital given here by the illustrious Pole. Or I shall go to see the film, because of the tragedy of his last concert.

Heifetz plays the violin in *They Shall Have Music* with that miraculous poise and perfection which have made so many of his personal appearances such strangely hypnotic experiences. The screen provides more than a master lesson for all violinists, for there is hardly an angle or a close-up which does not concentrate on the super-virtuoso's fingers travelling with well nigh magic sureness up and down the finger board. His right hand and bow is seen traversing the strings, coaxing and ordering them into lovely and impelling eloquence. The camera lense studies his face, searching it for those inner springs of feeling, fantasy and fertility of expressional strength which have made Heifetz the idolized violinist he is. It is intriguing to try and read this face which bespeaks artistic integrity and

human intensity. It also is a face that can be easily misread. Ultimately, this is a music film and a music film while made for the eye, comes up for final verdict before the ear.

Page Mr. Newman

¶ That every care has been taken to insure an excellent recording may be taken for granted. The Goldwyn staff, and Alfred Newman, musical director in charge of the score and musical renditions, who is seen in one scene giving Heifetz a fine orchestra accompaniment in the Saint-Saens *Rondo Capriccioso*, have gone to full efforts. Paul Neal, in charge of recording, who did such beautiful work when recording the score for *Stagecoach* and *Wuthering Heights*, again controlled the microphones. Some of his best tone quality was hardened and thus spoiled during the preview, because sound volume was too big. How long will it take before those in charge of previews will learn that loud, explosive sound is anything but beautiful or convincing, that it is the very opposite from being expressive?

Heifetz is heard in the Saint-Saens opus already mentioned; the *Hora Staccato*, by Dinico; *Estrellita*, his own arrangement; and the finale from the Mendelssohn violin concerto. The program lists also the Tchaikowsky *Melody*, but I must confess to not recalling this piece, which lapse I can explain only by saying that in trying to gain a most complete impression, some things are apt to slip through the meshes of memory.

Children's Orchestra

¶ This is not the first time that I hesitate praising Heifetz, not because I think praise should be withheld, but for reasons of his established superlativeness. As Deems Taylor remarks in the preview program, one may not always be wholly at one with Heifetz the artist, yet he ranks beyond disagreement.

Great praise is due to Peter Meremblum and his Southern California Junior Symphony. They are heard in highly musical readings of the accompaniment to Heifetz's performance of Mendelssohn and the *Barber of Seville* overture by Rossini, slightly re-scored I think. They also accompany Verdi's *Caro Nome* and Bellini's *Casta Diva* arias, sung by a truly remarkable child soprano, Jacqueline Nash, and in parts from Mendelssohn's *Italian Symphony* and Mozart's *Kleine Nacht Musik*. To laud the children is to laud their conductor-mentor, Peter Meremblum. By having these youngsters appear in sight and sound, Goldwyn has done something wonderful indeed which should inspire countless thousands of children and parents. It was wise not

to "doctor" the sound of this juvenile orchestra or to let the little prima donna appear the kind of vocal wonder child which in reality cannot exist because nature accomplishes only the near-impossible.

Consistent Values

¶ These children play and sing so spontaneously and expressively that minor blemishes make their good points rate all the higher. Little Miss Nash—whom I heard in person during a recording—is marvelously gifted in every regard. The charmingly serious and amusing piano soli of tiny Mary Ruth in Chopin's *Minute Waltz* was treated in the same way. I am sorry that Walter Brennan, as head of the school, conducts with obvious lack of rhythm. The picture is a real inside story of the "ups and downs" of an eastside music school, run by an idealistic musician for the sake of the children rather than for the sake of shekels. The story permits the use of such incidental music as one hears at a busy establishment of that kind, a fact enhancing the musical value of the picture and giving it musical consistency. Known while in the making as *Music School*, this Heifetz-starred production is now titled *They Shall Have Music*. And a good title it is, and a great message it conveys.

REVIEWS

(Continued from page 10)

in an effort to alibi her husband's absence, elaborates on his qualifications and magnify the superiority of the products he has manufactured from his formulas, sells herself into the job as manager.

Fine Direction and Acting

¶ Direction by Gus Meins from the well written screen play by Jack Townley and Taylor Caven is excellent throughout.

Photography, editing and art direction satisfactory.

The cast, without an exception, is perfect for this production. Those well-known portrayers of many characters, Henry Kolker, who seems never to age, and Berton Churchill, ably assisted by Arthur Hoyt, are splendid.

Marie Wilson, as Myrtle, Russel Gleason's wife, is impressive. And, of course, the Gleason family is, as always, par-excellent.

Suitable for any theatre showing clean, high class and wholesome entertainment. Take the entire family, including grandpa, grandma and Aunt Tilley, and give them a treat. Dad will love this one.

★ Motion picture appreciation ultimately will be a part of every high school curriculum.

I Cover the Middle West

BY
BERT HARLEN

ABOARD a train speeding eastward last month was your correspondent, being carried "away from it all" for a spell, away from previews and studios, arc lights, publicity stunts, and ostentation, back into the real Americana. Over hundreds of miles of hot, gleaming desert the train pushed, and then through hundreds of miles of the verdant Mississippi valley, its green fields of wheat swept by graceful billows driven before recurring breezes, its forests fresh and shady and strewn with rich fern, a beautiful country this time of year.

Most of the towns present streets lined with massive overhanging elms, and under them walk people who are the most typical Americans. They are absorbed with truly important concerns, concerns which, shared by millions of citizens in other small towns and cities of the country, give our nation its greatness—the civic improvements of their town, the building of the new high school, business success of local merchants, the prospects of sending their children to college—all important matters, though Hollywood would not consider them so, nor Broadway. Hollywood thinks the world revolves about Hollywood. The little towns are just "jumping off places."

Films Unique Art Medium

¶ This attitude is reflected in motion pictures, where the viewpoints and problems of these most typical Americans are seldom given any comprehensive or penetrating representation. Come to think of it, the motion picture is the only art medium that is not in close contact with the people. Music, poetry, the dance, drama and other literary forms are interwoven with the social fabric. To a large extent they spring from the people as a whole, and they remain a part of popular expression through interpretation.

But motion pictures are made almost solely in Hollywood or New York. With the possible exception of music, the only contact the film industry has with the masses is through literature, and even when a searching piece of fiction is adopted to the screen, the result generally bears the stamp of cinemaland.

Their Viewpoints Refreshing

¶ Most of these people have never seen a motion picture star in person, know nothing of guild problems or industrial codes; of players who cannot afford to be human, who must always be seen with the right people, because, children of fortune, their position depends largely on prestige; of old-time players who

are still internationally known but cannot get employment. No, these people view Hollywood merely as a rather romantic place on the west coast that contributes the social need of entertainment, as Detroit contributes the motor cars. They are interested in the screen and its players as a source of entertainment, romance, or artistic stimulus, but the film capital and the players exist for them only in a sort of mythological way.

It is refreshing to be among them and share their viewpoints. One gets a perspective on all the sound and fury of filmland.

The Play's the Thing

¶ Over fifteen hundred miles were traveled by automobile in the Middle West, seeing relatives and taking in the countryside. Keeping my ears pricked in an endeavor to sense the prevalent viewpoints on motion pictures of the public at large, I gathered that the interest in players themselves is not as great as it once was. Not once that I recall was I asked, "Have you seen Greta Garbo?", a question commonly put on a visit several years ago; but I was asked numerous times, "Have you seen *Juarez*?" or some other outstanding film. The old fan enthusiasm is dying down.

People are shopping for entertainment more than ever, and on the basis of a picture's total merit. There is progressively less of attending film theatres for lack of something else to do. There is plenty else to do. Sports are an outstanding interest of the average person, the dominant recreational interest of many, an enthusiasm doubtless given impetus by the radio. Golf has become tremendously popular throughout the Middle West.

Paradox Impresses Us

¶ Dancing is popular too. In fact, I am told that the business of booking dance orchestras throughout the country is thriving in an unprecedented way, despite general business conditions.

Double bills, of course, are everywhere. But no one likes them. Getting the same reactions in querying people from one town to another, one is struck by the paradox in the circumstance that the double bills are unpopular and yet continue to be shown month after month. A food manufacturer would not continue to market a product the public did not like, nor an automobile manufacturer. The motion picture producer does.

Westerns Preferred

¶ One night I chatted with a local exhibitor in Bethany, Missouri, a little

town of less than five thousand population in the heart of the farming district. Farmers form a sizeable part of picture audiences, especially on week-ends—leather-skinned, hearty, courageous people who wave to you as you jog along dirt roads off the highways, people who must work long hours in the beating sun and bitter cold; with little time or inclination for subtlety of thought; as a class, underpaid, the least advanced culturally.

Coming to town, they want excitement. Westerns are the favored fare. Sophisticated dramas do not go. *Marie Antoinette* was a bust. The best business of recent months was done with *Jessie James*. *Dodge City* was successful too.

Fifty Per Cent Action Wanted

¶ The exhibitor, an intelligent and analytical fellow, thinks that pictures to be successful with any audience should be fifty per cent action. Did he think most films contained that much action, I asked. No, was his reply. Toward the distributing exchanges he is not friendly. Block booking.

That night was dime night—all seats a dime. There was a fairly good house. The show really was not worth any more, however—a B picture, with Jack Holt, and some shorts.

National Solidarity Evincen

¶ Though Westerns are favored by the farmers, they manage to derive sufficient entertainment from the more worldly offerings, the usual tenor of the shows being dictated by the tastes of the townspeople. Coming attractions were *Society Lawyer* and *It's a Wonderful World*. It is interesting to note the extent of the attitudes and ideas held in common by these groups with different modes of living, but even more interesting—in fact, remarkable and admirable—is the growing national solidarity evincen by the fact that the run of motion pictures can entertain both Bethany and Broadway.

There are no more small towns in the old sense, isolated habitats of the proverbial hick. Radio, rapid transportation, motion pictures, extensive magazine publication, and advanced educational systems have eliminated them. A few backward communities may exist in remote mountainous regions, but the nation as a whole is becoming one great metropolis, with foci in the big cities. Girls on the streets of Bethany dress and behave the same as those on Hollywood Boulevard.

Only mishap: slipped on a slippery floor in a Kansas City restaurant, and I still sit quietly.

Studios Interested in Vocal Robot

By George Turner

JUST what the Vocoder will do for film, radio and sound recording is a subject which at the moment is tantalizing technicians. The modest claims of the Bell laboratories—that it is not a finished product, that it is the outgrowth of a mere telephonic experiment—are sagacious enough to whet studio curiosity the more. However, the recent demonstrations of the electrical instrument have proved sufficiently amazing to cause experts to predict even more than the utilization of trick effects.

Among the sensational stunts of this device that manufactures speech are: talking or singing into a microphone and causing a string quartet or a pipe organ to assimilate the words. The instruments literally sing words in their own individual tones. Similarly, the hum of an airplane or a dynamo, or the sound of a locomotive, acquire rhythmic speech. Again, the singing of one voice at the microphone becomes a trio—three-voice harmony, through combining different pitch channels. The intervals remaining constant are therefore not harmonically perfect at all times, but even this defect can be overcome, if need be. Whether worth while, is another question.

Remade Speech

¶ The Vocoder is a process by which sound of any kind is broken down through an analyzer, and reconstructed by a synthesizer. Many variations become possible as the sound stream is re-made.

The application of the Vocoder in speech study comes particularly from its ability to vary each of the elements of speech singly or together, the raw material of speech consisting of two sound streams. The first stream has three properties: pitch, determined by frequency of vibration; intensity, or the total sound power of the speaker, and quality, determined by the relative amounts of sound power carried in fixed frequency bands. As the stream proceeds, all three properties vary. The second sound stream has no pitch, but has varying intensity and quality. Only one of the two streams is active at one time during most of the speech.

The first sound stream, "the buzz," resembles a muted automobile horn—a monotone, from which single note electrical filters distinguish thirty different ranges of overtones, covering the gamut of the human voice. The same filters then break down the second stream, "the hiss," into thirty ranges. The hiss is the "s", "f", "sh", soft "th" and "c" and "h" of ordinary speech.

Mixing by finger controls, the analyzing circuit, thus picking out thirty parts, permits their control in proper amount before they reach the loud speaker. With the buzzer alone, the voice pitch is a flat monotone; the hiss alone converts the voice to a somewhat faint whisper.

Artificial Inflection

¶ Odd manifestations in vocal expression are contrived by reducing the variations of pitch. The Vocoder can make an enthusiastic sentence sound emotionless and dull, or, vice versa. When the swing of pitch is cut in half, the voice seems flat and dragging; when the swing is twice normal, the voice becomes brilliant, and four times normal makes it febrile and unnatural. By reversing the controls, high becomes low, a tune is heard upside down, talk takes on a Scandinavian lilt. An artificial vibrato can be injected into tones, seeming to be practically normal at six waves a second and becoming a rapid tremolo at ten. Running up and down the electrical frequency scale, a man's voice at the microphone is soprano at 275 cycles and a sub-human double bass at sixteen cycles.

From a utility point of view, the Vocoder in its present state seems most likely to interest animated cartoon producers, who are avidly discussing its possibilities. That it will effect any striking departures in sound recording for live subjects is more questionable, despite its astonishing tonal performances. As a means of overcoming the limitations of actors and singers it may function in various ways, beyond the mere changing of vocal pitch as already contrived by filters.

Move To Show How Pictures Are Made

THE butterfly must emerge from the cocoon. Great oaks from little acorns grow.

Back in 1924, Mrs. Ina Roberts, now editor of the *Spectator's* "Books and Films" department, conceived the idea of linking, for the benefit of the reading public, films and the books from which these are made as well as other books connecting with them by subject. The details were still vague. However, she took the idea to the local film exchanges of her town, Cleveland, where she was occupying the position of publicity director of the Cleveland Public Library.

The late M. A. Malaney, then publicity man for Loew's Cleveland Theatres, had faith; he merely said, after listening to Mrs. Roberts: "You and I are going to work together a lot." Mrs. Roberts and C. C. Dourdourff, MGM ace exploitation man, worked out the

first film bookmark, which was for *Scaramouche*. The Cleveland library made the book list for this, and distributed the bookmarks. Other film exhibits and bookmarks in other libraries followed. Gradually the idea, aided by the powerful influence and expert handling of the Cleveland library, spread throughout the country. Later came the study guides; the magazine, *The Motion Picture and the Family*, published for three years by the Hays organization; Mrs. Roberts' own magazine, *Books and Films*, which is now combined with the *Spectator* as a department; and last, but not least, the research panels that opened the schools to direct cooperation with films.

From Idea to Fulfillment

¶ About this time, after studying carefully his capabilities and character, Mrs. Roberts took into her office Frederick Myers, then very young, and trained him for several years to fill her position when she should leave. Since Mrs. Roberts moved to Los Angeles, early in 1938, Mr. Myers has filled this position and is now director of public relations for the Cleveland library.

The foregoing has related to the cocoon stage; now Mr. Myers has conceived another idea, from which the butterfly will issue.

This idea consists of a plan to link, with films, by means of an exhaustive exhibit, the books from which these are made and the other books related to them by subject; also the 276 professions involved in their making.

Mr. Myers says his idea grew out of Barret Kiesling's book, *Talking Pictures; How They Are Made; How to Appreciate Them*, in which Mr. Kiesling states that 276 professions are needed to make one motion picture.

Because he gained his idea from this book; because of the faith shown by the late M. A. Malaney and C. C. Dourdourff and the later faith and cooperation shown by MGM, through such men as Howart Dietz, W. R. Ferguson, Howard Strickling and Barrett Kiesling, Mr. Myers contacted MGM in regard to his idea. Out of this conference has grown the plan for an exhibit. It will include books to be filmed, other related books and books on the 276 professions, illustrated by still photographs depicting the parts played by the 276 professions in the making of films.

Making Still Photos

¶ Mr. Myers is now in Hollywood to supervise the making of the still photographs at the MGM studios. Upon his return to Cleveland, the exhibit will be arranged and installed by A. C. Young, curator of exhibits for the Cleveland Public Library. After having been shown there, the exhibit will tour the libraries of the country. Librarians of

(Continued on page 15)

Books and Films

Coast Guard

¶ This film deals with the work of the United States Coast Guard. Did you know that the Coast Guard is seven years older than the Navy? That it protects seals from poachers, supervises sponge fisheries and wild bird protect- orates, destroys dangerous derelicts in shipping lanes, guards the coast against smugglers and customs duty evaders and aids in time of war, floods, hurri- canes and other disasters? That it maintains its own Academy, compar- able to West Point and Annapolis? That since the Coast Guard instituted its Ice Patrol in 1913, the year the Ti- tantic sank, not a single life has been lost through a ship's collision with ice? That it carries mail, supplies and medi- cine to Alaskan ports with the annual ice break?

Our *Coast Guard*, by Evan J. David and *Coast Guard to the Rescue*, by Karl Baarslag will be found interesting and instructive in connection with the film.

Burton of Arabia

¶ Darryl Zanuck announces that *Bur- ton of Arabia* will be one of the major pictures on the 20th Century-Fox sched- ule for the coming year. Sir Richard Burton, who, by the way, gave us the first literal translation of *The Arabian Nights*, was a born traveler. In dis- guise he penetrated into the forbidden city of Mecca. His exploits have been written by Viscount Castellos.

Stanley and Livingstone

¶ This film will be released in August. A year and a half ago the director, Otto Brower, went with Mrs. Martin John- son to Africa to get genuine shots for this film. Brower and his safari built a village which is an exact replica of Ujiji, the place where Henry Stanley found the lost missionary, after one of the most arduous journeys of history.

More than 700 natives worked six weeks to construct the forty-eight thatched houses and a wild animal stockade. Brower had previously ar- ranged with British government agents that this settlement would be available to natives after the movie company left it. On the day the film expedition de- parted 200 natives moved in with no rent to pay. The population has since swelled to 500, which makes the vil- lage one of the ten largest all-native settlements in Tanganyika. This vil- lage, a replica of Ujiji, has been named Browsha after Director Otto Brower. It is good news to learn that at last a movie-made building is to be lasting and to serve a useful purpose after playing its part in a film.

From Stage to College

¶ Brenda Joyce, whom the movies re- cently called from her work at the Uni- versity of California, has decided to study at night for two years in order to complete her course. She makes her screen debut in *The Rains Came*.

Gilbert and Sullivan

¶ The following books, listed on a bookmark issued by the Cleveland Pub- lic Library, will be of interest at this time:

W. S. Gilbert, *His Life and Letters*, by Dark & Gray; *Bab Ballads*, by Gil- bert; *Original Plays and Savoy Operas*, *The Story of the Mikado*, by Gilbert (illustrated); *Sir Arthur Sullivan*, bi- ographies by Lawrence and MacLean; *English Music in the 16th Century*, by Maitland; *In the Garret*, by Van Vech- ten; *Arthur Sullivan*, by Wyndham; *Jimmy's Cruise in the Pinafore*, by Al- cott; *My Wanderings*, by Barnabee; *Gilbert and Sullivan and Their Operas*, by Cellier and Bridgeman; *The Op- eras of Gilbert and Sullivan Described*, by Fitzgerald; *Old Boston Museum Days*, by Ryan; *Old Days in Bohemian London*, by Scott.

BY
INA ROBERTS

CURRENT FILMS

Andy Hardy Gets Spring Fever—Andy turns playwright; school play. MGM
Bill of Rights—Featurette in historical series; John Litel, Crane Wilbur as King John, and all-star cast. Warner
Captain Fury—Australia, 1840; Brian Aberne, Paul Lukas. U.A.
Career—Play by Stong; Anne Shirley, Edward Ellis; released 9-15. RKO
Goodbye, Mr. Chips—Novel by Hilton; made in England; Robert Donat, Greer Garson; released 6-2; rev. Spec. 5-27. MGM
Good Girls Go to Paris—Melvyn Doug- las, Joan Blondell, Walter Connolly. Col.
Of Human Bondage—Reissue; Leslie Howard, Bette Davis. RKO
On Borrowed Time—Novel by Edward Lawrence Katkin; Frank Morgan; Sir Cedric Hardwicke; rev. Spec. 7-8. MGM
Parents on Trial—Jean Parker, Johnny Downs, Noah Beery, Jr. Col.
Second Fiddle—Formerly *When Winter Comes*; based on *Heart Interest*; play by George Bradshaw; songs by Irving Berlin; Sonja Henie, Rudy Vallee, Don Ameche; released 7-14; rev. Spec. 7-8. 20th-Fox
Sons of Liberty—Short; life of Haym Salomon. Warner
Stronger Than Desire—Novel by W. E. Woodward; Robert Montgomery, Vir- ginia Bruce; rev. Spec. 7-8. MGM
They All Come Out—Government aid to released prisoners. MGM
The Mikado—Opera by Gilbert and Sul- livan; Kenny Baker. Univ.
Way Down South—Mississippi River, 1840; Bob Breen. RKO

COMING FILMS

Bachelor Mother—Formerly *Little Moth- er*; play by Felix Jackson; Ginger Rogers; released 8-5; rev. Spec. 7-8. RKO
Bad Company—Jackie Cooper, Freddie Bartholomew. Univ.
Beau Geste—Novel by Wren; Gary Coop- er; released 9-1. Para.
Chicken Wagon Family—Novel by Barry Benefield; released 8-11. 20th-Fox
Coast Guard—Ralph Bellamy, Randolph Scott; released 8-5. Col.
Double-Dyed Deceiver—Based on *The Llano Kid*, by O. Henry; released 11-3. Para.
Dust Be My Destiny—Novel by Jerome Odlum; John Garfield, Pat O'Brien. Warner
Each Dawn I Die—Novel by Jerome Odlum; James Cagney, Ann Sheri- dan; released 8-6. Warner
Flying Cadets—Freddie Bartholomew, Jackie Cooper. Univ.
Four Feathers—Novel by A. E. W. Ma- son; adapted by R. C. Sherriff; tech- nicolor; filmed in England and Sudan; released 8-5. U.A.
Frontier Marshall—Wyatt Earp; Tomb- stone, Arizona; silver mining camp; Randolph Scott. 20th-Fox
Geronimo—Apaches in Southwest; Pres- ton Foster, Ellen Drew; released 11-10. Para.
Heaven With a Barbed Wire Fence—By author of *Man to Remember*; cross- country hiking. 20th-Fox
Hobby Family—Assorted hobbies; Irene Rich, Henry O'Neill; released August. Warner
In Old California—Slave smuggling; 1840; Richard Arlen, Andy Devine. Univ.
Jamaica Inn—Novel by Daphne Du Maurier; Charles Laughton; released 10-13. Para.
Lady and the Knight—Formerly *Eliza- beth and Essex*; formerly *Knight and the Lady*; based on play *Elizabeth*. 20th-Fox

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Man in the Iron Mask—Louis Hayward, Joan Bennett, Doris Kenyon as Queen Anne; released July. U.A.

Memory of Love—Novel by Bessie Breuer; Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.; released 9-4. RKO

No Place to Go—Based on *Old Man Minick*; play by Edna Ferber. Warner

Nurse Edith Cavell—Anna Neagle, Edna May Oliver, May Robson, H. B. Warner, Fritz Leiber, Zasu Pitts. RKO

Old Grad—Anita Louise, Charley Grapevin; story by Matt Gayln. Univ.

Our Leading Citizen—Bob Burns, Susan Hayward; released 8-11. Para.

The Old Maid—Novel by Edith Wharton; play by Zoe Akins; Bette Davis, Miriam Hopkins, George Brent. Warner

Pinocchio—Juvenile by C. Collodi; feature cartoon; Walt Disney; Christmas release. RKO

Real Glory—Philippines; Gary Cooper, Andrea Leeds, David Niven. U.A.

Roll, Wagons, Roll—Tex Ritter. Mono.

Stanley and Livingstone—Spencer Tracy; released 8-18. 20th-Fox

Stunt Pilot—Tailspin Tommy; rev. Spec. 7-8. Mono.

Susannah of the Mounties—Juvenile by Mariel Denison; Shirley Temple; released 6-23. 20th-Fox

The Women—Play by Clare Booth; Norma Shearer, Joan Crawford, Rosalind Russell. MGM

They Shall Have Music—Formerly *Music School*; Jascha Heifetz. U.A.

What a Life—Play by Clifford Goldsmith; high school age; Jackie Cooper, Betty Field, John Howard; released 10-6. Para.

The Wizard of Oz—Juvenile by Frank Baum; Judy Garland, Mickey Rooney; August release. MGM

Winter Carnival—Sports; Ann Sheridan, Richard Carlson; released July 29. U.A.

A Woman Is the Judge—Otto Kruger, Rochelle Hudson. Col.

IN PRODUCTION

Alleghany Frontier—Formerly *Pennsylvania Uprising*; based on *The First Rebel*, by Neil Swanson; ten years before Battle of Lexington; John Wayne. RKO

All This and Heaven Too—Novel by Balakauka—Play by Eric Maschwitz; Nelson Eddy, Ilona Massey. MGM

Bright Victory—Texas oil fields; Freddie Bartholomew, Jackie Cooper. Univ.

Career Man—Script by James Hilton; John Garfield, Ann Sheridan. Warner

Cat and the Canary—Bob Hope, Paulette Goddard; released 9-8. Para.

Crump At Oxford—Laurel and Hardy. U.A.

Dancing Co-ed—Fred Astaire, Eleanor Powell. MGM

Day At the Circus—Marx Brothers. MGM

Disputed Passage—Novel by Lloyd Douglas; Dorothy Lamour, Akim Tamiroff; autumn release; released 10-27. Para.

Drums Along the Mohawk—Novel by Walter Edmonds; Henry Fonda, Claudette Colbert; released 11-24. 20th-Fox

First Love—Deanna Durbin, Spring Byington, Eugene Pallette. Univ.

Five Little Peppers and How They Grew—Juvenile story by Margaret Sidney Lothrop. Col.

Gone With the Wind—Novel by Margaret Mitchell; Leslie Howard, Vivien Leigh, Clark Gable, Olivia de Havilland. MGM

Here I Am a Stranger—McCall magazine story by Gordon Hillman; father and son; college; released 9-29. 20th-Fox

Hollywood Cavalcade—Alice Faye; released 8-19. 20th-Fox

Housekeeper's Daughter—Novel by Donald Henderson Clark. U.A.

Hunchback of Notre Dame—Novel by Hugo; Charles Laughton, Maureen O'Hara, Walter Hampden, Sir Cecil Hardwicke, Edmond O'Brien, Minna Gombell. RKO

Intermezzo—Original screen play by John Van Duten. U.A.

Irish Luck—Frankie Darro; Sheila Darcy, Dick Purcell. Mono.

Light That Failed—Novel by Kipling; Ronald Colman, Muriel Angelus, Ida Lupino. Para.

Mr. Smith Goes to Washington—Continues adventures of *Mr. Deeds*; Jean Arthur, James Stewart, Claude Rains, Guy Kibbee, Eugene Pallette; released September. Col.

Ninotchka—Greta Garbo. MGM

Northwest Passage—Novel by Kenneth Roberts; Spencer Tracy, Wallace Beery, Robert Taylor. MGM

Our Leading Citizen—Bob Burns, Susan Hayward; released 8-11. Para.

Our Neighbors the Carters—Frank Craven, Genevieve Tobin, Edmund Lowe. Para.

Prison Surgeon—Walter Connolly. Col.

Rebecca—Novel by Daphne Du Maurier; production begins June. U.A.

Ruler of the Seas—Epic of sail vs. steam; released 11-24. Para.

Seventeen—Novel by Tarkington; Jackie Cooper, Betty Field, Otto Kruger. Para.

Star-Maker—Semi-biography of Gus Edwards; released 8-25. Para.

The Rains Came—Novel by Louis Bromfield; released 10-27. 20th-Fox

Thunder Afloat—Marine chasers in World War; Wallace Beery, Chester Morris. MGM

20,000 Years In Sing Sing—Story by Warden Lawes; John Garfield. Warner

We Are Not Alone—Novel by Hilton. Warner

FUTURE FILMS

Abe Lincoln in Illinois—Play by Robert Sherwood; Raymond Massey. RKO

A Call on the President—Story by Damon Runyon; Lewis Stone. MGM

American School Teacher—Bob Burns; production to start in June. RKO

And It All Came True—Novel by Bromfield; James Stewart, Ann Sheridan. Warner

Fighting 69th—Pat O'Brien as Father Duffy. Warner

Forgive Us Our Trespasses—Novel by Lloyd Douglas; John Garfield, Fay Bainter. Warner

House Across the Bay—Play by Myles Connolly; Joan Bennett. U.A.

Invisible Stripes—Story by Warden Lawes and Jonathan Finn; stigma attached to released prisoners. Warner

Life and Melodies of Victor Herbert. Para.

Stranger at Home—Life of Hans Christian Andersen. U.A.

Life of Dr. Ehrlich—Edward G. Robinson. Warner

A Modern Cinderella—Novel by James M. Cane; Charles Boyer, Irene Dunne. Univ.

Rebecca—Novel by Daphne Du Maurier. U.A.

Sea Hawk—Novel by Sabatini; Errol Flynn, Geraldine Fitzgerald, Basil Rathbone. Warner

Spirit of Knute Rockne—John Payne. Warner

Tombstone—Arizona Frontier; Wyatt Earp; Errol Flynn, Olivia de Havilland. Warner

Vigil in the Night—Novel by A. J. Cronin. RKO

EXHIBIT PLAN SUCCESSFUL

(Continued from page 13)

three states who have visited Cleveland since the inception of the plan, have asked that it be sent to their libraries.

This, then, is the story of the growth of an idea; it is also a story of how faith ultimately comes into its own, for it was the faith and help given to the growing idea, even when untried, vague and nebulous, that resulted in the MGM connection with this new impetus given to book-film cooperation.

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Fourteenth Year

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Vol. 14—No. 17

Exhibitors Should Note Names of
Those Who Make Box-Office Films
Without Picture Brains Behind
Them Stars Soon Would Lose Out
Once More We Hear The Old Plaint
That the Public Wants New Faces



REVIEWED: Destry Rides Again ★ Four Wives ★ The Night of Nights
The Great Victor Herbert ★ Joe and Ethel Turp Call On the President
(Page 6) The Cisco Kid and the Lady ★ Escape to Paradise
Private Detective ★ The Big Guy



From the EDITOR'S EASY CHAIR

A WORD WITH EXHIBITORS

WHEN block booking is abolished and production and exhibition divorced, the exhibitor is going to be the biggest man in filmdom. He will be in a position to buy only the pictures he feels will please his patrons, will buy them only after they are made, and to get those he wants he no longer will have to buy others he does not want and which he knows will not pay their way when shown in his theatre.

The effect of the new order of things will be to put an end to the mass making of pictures which are sold before they are made. Each will be an individual production which will be sold on its own merits, and the people who will be the most successful in meeting the market requirements are the present associate producers and producer-directors. No longer will an exhibitor buy a picture solely because it is made by Metro or Fox. He can buy in an open market, and in making his selections he will be influenced only by their entertainment qualities and not by the trademarks they bare.

Should Place Reliance on Names

¶ But the exhibitor will face one difficulty — that of being unable to see every picture made before determining which ones he wishes to show in his house. Eventually, in making his selections he will have to depend to a large extent on names of individual producers. For instance, if he buys a picture made by David Selznick — a picture he sees before he buys it and was influenced in purchasing solely by the picture's merits and without regard for the name of the maker — and if such picture makes money for him, he may feel reasonably safe in buying another Selznick production sight-unseen, and in keeping on buying them as long as they prove profitable attractions for his house.

It seems to me it would be a wise thing for exhibitors to begin now to note the names of those who make the pictures at present showing and those which will be shown before the new order is ushered in. When a picture does a big business for an exhibitor he should make a record of the names of the individual producer, the director, the writer. Perhaps he attributes the success of the picture to the popularity of its star or stars, but he must take into account that if its producer, director and writer had fallen down on their jobs, the star names in themselves would not prove strong enough to account for the profitable showing.

No player makes himself a star. Back of him must be picture brains. A company trademark cannot make a star. Metro's lion has no picture brains. His reputation was made by people on the studio payroll, by producers, directors, writers, technicians who provide the player with the vehicles which carry him to stardom and keep him there. The names of these people are the ones exhibitors should remember. They, not the stars, can make or break an exhibitor.

In the days when traveling companies provided the dramatic entertainment in cities which get it now only in motion pictures, the fact that it was a Frohman production or that the play was by Booth Tarkington was sufficient to bring money to the box-office, when no famous star name headed the cast. Film theatre owners can derive as much assurance from the names of Hollywood producers, directors and writers if they acquaint themselves with the names on the credit lists of the pictures which make money for them.

Exhibitors Should Note the Names

¶ Exhibitors, should keep in mind the fact that no player ever made himself or herself a star, nor has his or her box-office pull been retained solely by the star. Only good pictures make stars and only more good pictures sustain stardom. For instance, Gary Cooper's name will draw paying audiences to film theatres, but if he appeared in two poor pictures in a row, he no longer would be the box-office magnet he is now. Gary is a great star, first, because he knows nothing about acting; and, secondly, because he has a personality of practically universal appeal. He has maintained his star status because he has been fortunate in being starred in pictures made by producers intelligent enough to realize both his possibilities and his limitations, and to employ writers and directors who can develop his possibilities and keep him within his limits.

It is important, therefore, that an exhibitor who makes money with a Cooper picture or a picture with any other star, should keep a record of the names of the individual producer, the writer and the director, and if the three names appear in the list of credits of another picture, he may be sure it will please his patrons even though there be no outstanding star names in the cast. Each of the three names will convey a certain amount of assurance even when appearing with two others with which the exhibitor is not familiar. But if the exhibitor keeps a carefully composed list of the producers, directors and writers

whose names are connected with successful pictures he has shown, he will find himself in a position to buy his attractions with more assurance of box-office success than if he is governed in his selections only by the names of the stars who head the casts.

When the exhibitor no longer is forced to buy his pictures blindly, the welfare of the entire film industry will be in his hands. He should start now to prepare himself to use his power intelligently.

* * *

CERTAINLY ACTIVE TREE BUILDER

ACCORDING to Hedda Hopper, as recorded in her daily column, Nick Kaltenstadler, chief nurseryman for 20th Century-Fox studio, "in his twenty-four years career has built more than one million trees for use in the movies." That means that Nick, working Sunday, holidays, and all the rest of the days during the nearly quarter-century, has managed to turn out each day 133 trees and part of another one. If the Administration at Washington is sincere in its effort to cut down the expense of running the country, it would fire all the employees in the reforestation division and hire Nick to do the job alone. But I think he should be allowed to take time out on an occasional Sunday and certainly on the Fourth of July.

* * *

DIRECTORS SHOULD BE MORE CAREFUL

MAJORITY of pictures make obvious the carelessness with which they are shot. To illustrate, take these scenes from "Day-Time Wife," a recent Century production directed by Gregory Ratoff: Eight or ten people are grouped on the floor of a room in a home which reflects wealth and culture. Conversation is general. Two of the people detach themselves from the group, move less than a dozen steps away, indulge in intimate conversation the others in the room should not hear, yet the two speak loudly enough to be heard all over the room, and not a sound of another voice is heard. It is as if the remainder of the group had been stricken dumb when the two stepped to one side. It is easy to see how the blunder was committed. Ratoff directed the long shot showing the group as a whole and let us hear the general chatter. Later, perhaps the next day or the next week, the director shot a close-up of the two, and overlooked entirely its relation to what had preceded it.

If the close shot had been made intelligently and with regard for its place in the sequence as a whole, the two would have spoken in tones too low to be heard by those who should not hear what was being said, and as background for the scene there would have been the continued chatter of those still grouped so near the two in the intimate scene. The fault is a frequent one. It is a rare picture in which you do not see it. A sister-idiocy is that which shows only one couple talking on a crowded dance floor, the rest silent, stoney-faced, expressing animation only with their feet, while the two principals talk loudly, the lack of the mob's reaction to what it cannot help hearing proving that those who compose it are stoney-

faced because they are stone-deaf.

Most directors seem to overlook the important fact that it is the picture as a whole the public sees, not a succession of unrelated scenes. When at a fashionable function two people are shot in a close-up, directors should not give us the impression all the rest of the guests were told to shut up.

* * *

F. HUGH HERBERT WRITES A BOOK

ONE of my oldest Hollywood friendships has been that with F. Hugh Herbert, writer of screen plays and books. We never agree on any topic we discuss, and our years of friendship have been seasoned with an unending series of most entertaining quarrels. I know he is nutty and he thinks I am. It is with extreme reluctance, therefore, and a degree of chagrin, that I am compelled to admit that his latest book, "The Revolt of Henry" (G. P. Putman's Sons, N. Y.), is most entertaining reading. It is an intimate story of a mismatched married couple, a wife with a nitwit personality, a husband with a murder complex he does not use. It is amusing, human, moves along briskly. It should be read by any producers in the market for a domestic comedy.

* * *

SORRY, BUT WE DIFFER WITH HEDDA

RECENTLY in her syndicated column my good friend, Hedda Hopper, takes motion picture producers to task for their failure to develop talent to still the clamor of the public for new faces on the screen, and proceeds to tell the producers what she would do if it were up to her to set things right. She would have all the studios join in the establishment and maintenance of a little theatre in which aspirants for screen honors could "work steadily and develop craftsmanship."

Hedda's idea would be an excellent one if Hollywood were going into the business of producing plays for Broadway theatres, but as Hollywood's business is one of making motion pictures, the cure she suggests would make the patient sicker than it is now. The illusion that the screen went stage when it went talkie is responsible, directly and indirectly, for every ill the film industry now is suffering. A course in stage acting will shorten the career of any newcomer to the screen. The leading film box-office players are now and always will be those who have had no stage experience and those who have forgotten what they learned on the stage.

Get Back to First Principle

I agree, however, with Hedda that something radical should be done to buck up film box-offices. It can be done by a return to screen fundamentals—the recognition of the camera as the story-telling medium, which automatically would reduce the excessive talking now poisoning the box-office. If an institution is to be established for the teaching of screen technique, it should be done for prospective writers who never have seen a stage play and from the first should be

taught to write their stories in pictures, not in dialogue.

Writing stories to fit stars is another evil which has a distressing effect on film box-offices. Hollywood now proceeds upon the assumption that the star is more important than the story. It would take a long time to get the same idea out of the heads of those who pay to see screen entertainment, but the film industry has a lot of time left in which to make pictures, and it could be done. When writing a screen story, the story should be the only idea in the writer's head; and in casting it, the suitability of players for the various parts should be the only idea in the producer's head. Never should he distort a well written characterization to fit the individuality of a star. There are available in Hollywood plenty of people to fit any part a writer can create.

Public's Capacity for Friendship

¶ And another point upon which I differ with my friend Hedda, is that old, bewhiskered plaint that the public constantly is clamoring for new faces. Nothing could be more absurd. It is contrary to all human instincts. Not until we wish to see only strangers around our tables when we are giving dinner parties, will we wish to see only strangers on the screens of the picture houses we patronize. The greatest dividends life pays are the agreeable human contacts we make, and the richest man is he who sees friendly faces every way he looks.

The trouble with Hollywood is that it tries to concentrate our friendship on a small number of stars. Our appetite for friendship is greater than the supply of stars given us to appease it, and our capacity for retaining it is greater than the producers realize. Louella Parsons writes that every time on her personal appearance tour she mentions an oldtime star, his or her name is greeted with a storm of applause. There are scores of old faces the public would welcome, and scores among newcomers which would be welcomed when they had appeared often enough to form friendships. Casting parts solely with regard for the specifications of the writers, and distorting none to fit a certain player, soon would give the film box-office the upswing it needs so badly.

* * *

DOGS AS PICTURE ASSETS

MOST homes have dogs in them. As I write at the moment, my spaniel is curled in an easy chair not far from mine. He contributes greatly to the domestic atmosphere of the room, gives it a touch a human would not give. If it were a motion picture scene, the effect of his presence would be the same. would strike a responsive chord in the emotions of the audience, for those who love dogs greatly outnumber those who do not. Yet it is seldom we see dogs on the screen solely to dress sets, dogs which enter or leave a scene at will, which behave on the screen as they do in your home and mine. Ask a producer about it and he will tell you dogs are nuisances when scenes are being shot. That is a poor excuse. Having to do

anything is more or less a nuisance. The present condition of film box-offices would suggest the wisdom of overcoming any nuisance which could be transformed into something to add to a picture's drawing power. And the greater use of dogs in dressing sets would achieve that end.

* * *

STAR MATERIAL BEING OVERLOOKED

WHILE viewing the performance of Edna Mae Oliver in "Drums Along the Mohawk," I thought how easily she could have become one of today's leading box-office stars if any one of our big producers had had brains enough, six or seven years ago when she first came to the screen, to realize her potentialities and groom her for stardom. At that time the Spectator urged her claim to recognition as a possible star. One of the factors contributing to the present box-office slump is the ridiculous contention of producers that the public demands only young and beautiful feminine stars. The public demands an opportunity to laugh, and anyone who can cause it to sprinkle laughter throughout the showing of a feature picture, always will pull people into film theatres. Neither youth nor age has box-office value on its own account; nor will the perfection in acting technique give a player prominence on the screen in the same measure as it will bring him honors as a stage actor. Miss Oliver came to pictures from the stage, bringing with her that inner something the stage could not use, but which could have made her an outstanding screen star. And there are others like her, people who play even smaller parts in pictures because producers are not equipped mentally to appreciate their possibilities.

* * *

COMPREHENSIVE HISTORY OF FILMS

QUITE an extraordinary book is "The Rise of the American Film," by Lewis Jacobs (Harcourt, Brace and Company, \$4.50). It is a mammoth work (585 type pages, 48 pages of illustrations) and has a wealth of information never before assembled between covers. It fades in on 1896—and fades out on 1939. Its scope is set forth tersely on the jacket:

"This is the first comprehensive and critical history of the American movie as a commodity, as an art, and as a social agency. It is distinguished by an original approach and unusual form. The author traces the film from its commercial beginnings in 1896 to the present time, investigating and evaluating it as an industry, as an artistic medium, and as a social force. The financial structures of American film commerce are charted; the discoveries and contributions significant to the growth of film technique are analyzed; the effect of the changing times upon the content of American movies and the movie's content upon the changing times, are revealed for the first time in an examination of hundreds of films since the turn of the century. The book stresses the inter-relationship and contributions of each of these three major factors which are responsible for the American motion pic-

ture's phenomenal rise: the business man, the scientist, the artist."

The only quarrel I have with the above statements is that the book is not a "critical history of the American movie . . . as an art." It accepts the talking picture as the ultimate in the screen's development as a medium of entertainment, and does not concern itself with the fact that when the film industry ceased making silent pictures it abandoned the art which created it and gave us a bastardized product of a misalliance between film ignorance and the sound device. But the book is none the less one which should be in the library of everyone interested in the physical history of the screen.

* * *

DEAF SUBSCRIBER AGREES WITH US

TELL a director a picture he made was harmed by the manner in which his players almost shouted their lines, and he will tell you the fault lies in the hands of theatre projectionists who step up the sound beyond the point of its being easy to listen to. The Spectator always has contended it is not the volume of the sound which irritates an audience, that the irritating quality in too loudly read lines cannot be eliminated even if the sound be stepped down to the volume of a whisper. From Joseph R. Adams, a Des Moines, Iowa, subscriber to the Spectator, comes support of its contention. "I want to tell you of one of the many things about which you are correct," writes Mr. Adams. "I am hard of hearing and to some extent rely upon lip reading to follow what the actors on the screen are saying. Only when they talk in loud tones can I hear everything clearly. But when two actors, standing close to one another and not quarreling, speak so loud I hear them distinctly, I know they are talking more loudly than there is reason for, and I do not like it. I did not know why until I read what you wrote about it not being possible to take out what irritates me, even by lowering the tone when the picture is being shown. I thought this would interest you. Tell the people who make the pictures that even deaf people don't like to be shouted at."

* * *

WE SUGGEST AN AWARD

THIS being the open season for Academy award suggestions, I would like to make one. It is that one of the largest Oscars should be presented to the director who first shows us a football coach addressing his squad with his back to the camera and facing his listeners. Or it might be awarded to any director who stages a huddle of any sort in which all the people in it are not looking at the back of a person making a speech to them.

* * *

"LADIES FIRST" A GOOD RULE

OF COURSE, if I were an actor I no doubt would behave as actors behave, but, not being an actor, I feel if I were one and were a male star co-starring with a female star, I would insist upon her getting first billing. Possibly it is because I am old-fashioned that

it gripes me when I see such billing as "Robert Taylor and Greer Garson" in something or other. It gives me the feeling that Bob is guilty of displaying bad taste. And it is a safe bet that outside Hollywood, where provisions in stars' contracts are unknown and the rules governing credits also are unknown, there are a few million other old-fashioned people who would be pleased more with Bob if the billing were "Greer Garson and Robert Taylor." Social conventions, you know, have some box-office value, too.

* * *

MENTAL MEANDERINGS

EIGHT-FORTY-FIVE A.M.; in a lawn chair, pad on knee, the Spaniel lying at my right, the Peke in front of me, my pipe drawing nicely, not a blessed idea in my head, the bottom of the column a long distance away. . . . A pause while a bumblebee, built like a battleship, landed on the wrist of my sweater, applauded me with his hind feet, continued on his wandering course as if trying to baffle any submarines which might be lurking underneath him. Do not see many bumblebees, but there are a lot of the honey kind zooming from flower to flower a few feet from me. . . . Started the day by helping Tom, the man-about-the-place, put the last of the firewood in the back of the garage where the winter rains will not reach it. There is a lot of comfort and illuminated warmth for Mrs. Spectator and me stored away in the blocks of wood which on winter nights will achieve their destiny in the living-room fireplace, recreated warmth of the sun they absorbed during the decades they were reaching for the sky. . . . A few nights ago a friend dropped in, made directly for the radio, explaining he wanted to get a Berlin broadcast, and in a minute he had it, as clear as if from a local station. We have had the set for three years, and had no idea it could perform like that. Since then I have been exploring the world, but swore off last night to relieve the strain on Mrs. Spectator's nervous system. . . . Sixteen years ago, on the night the station first went on the air, I stepped to the KNX microphone and said, "This is KNX, the voice of Hollywood," and the phrase became a permanent announcement. . . . Our rural district has taken on city ways; as I was leaving a Van de Kamp bakery a young fellow entered, attempted a hold-up and was killed by a policeman's bullet—just a newspaper item for a day, but endless sorrow in some home. . . . Our apricot trees have laudable habits; early in the spring they sprout leaves and blossoms, then bend their branches beneath the weight of golden fruit; follows the summer during which they provide generous and welcome shade, and not until now, with Christmas so near, are the last leaves falling to give right of way to the rays and warmth of the sun without interfering shade, while on our cellar shelves the gold of their fruit shines from glass containers. . . . Winter nights are cold in the Valley along which our dirt road runs; I wear long flannel nightshirts and don't care a gol darn who knows it.

What Late Ones Look Like

Western Moves Up To Class A Dignity

DESTROY RIDES AGAIN, Universal

Producer Joe Pasternak
Director George Marshall
Story Felix Jackson
Photography Hal Mohr
Art director Jack Otterson
Musical director Charles Previn
Musical score Frank Skinner

Cast: Marlene Dietrich, James Stewart, Mischa Auer, Charles Winninger, Una Merkel, Brian Donlevy, Irene Hervey, Allen Jenkins, Billy Gilbert, Samuel Hinds, Jack Carson, Warren Hymer.

STANDARD Western raised by star names to the dignity of Class A rating. As far back as June, 1926, in the full flush of its youthful optimistic enthusiasm, the *Spectator* announced in determined looking type that Westerns should be the most important pictures on the programs of every studio, that the biggest stars should appear in them. Universal seemingly has come around finally to the *Spectator's* way of thinking. It dignifies Westerns by giving us Marlene Dietrich and Jimmie Stewart in one of them, and at the same time takes the dignity out of Marlene and shoots her up to an important place on the box-office list. She certainly will be in demand after *Destry Rides Again* is shown generally. And Westerns will be in demand for the biggest houses.

Joe Pasternak, one of Hollywood's most gifted producers, was cautious in making his first Western. To be on the safe side, he put into it a little of everything, and a lot of some of the things, which had been in every picture of the sort made prior to his. That is one weakness of his first attempt — he keeps his screen too crowded. And on the whole it is too noisy, there being little of the stern-silent-man of the West feeling in it. Charley Winninger's voice becomes hard to listen to, and Sam Hinds's cud of chewing tobacco finally becomes disgusting, even though it is silent.

Makes Good Box-Office

¶ But what matters most about Joe's picture is that it is good box-office. Marlene Dietrich's telling performance will come as no surprise to those who could see the promise behind her previous characterizations, and Jimmie Stewart's superb performance will not surprise anyone who has watched his steady progress to recognition as one of the screen's most brilliant actors. Marlene's singing is one of the most entertaining features of the picture. Una Merkel, always one of the screen's most dependable players, adds strength to the cast

even though her role does not give her a chance to realize all her possibilities. Mischa Auer, Brian Donlevy, Allen Jenkins, Irene Hervey, Virginia Brissac, Billy Gilbert are among others who contribute to the entertainment quality of the picture.

Jack Otterson's skill as an art director is responsible for the authentic Western atmosphere his settings reflect. His saloon is one of the most colorful yet to appear in a Western picture, the elaborate bar with its ornate carving being reminiscent of the baroque design of the time of the story. Hal Mohr's photography does full justice to all the pictorial possibilities of everything at which his camera was aimed. Felix Jackson's story was made into a virile screen play by him, Gertrude Purcell and Henry Myers, and the three are to be credited with one of the liveliest scripts ever handed a director. George Marshall makes the most of its possibilities.

Even though it is full of shooting and sudden death, you may take the children. They are used to such things in Westerns. Study groups should note how Hinds's constant tobacco chewing ruins his characterization, even though it was designed to give individuality to it. Exhibitors can promise a new Dietrich, one of the most dynamic Western heroines we have had.

The Great Herbert Makes Andy Great

THE GREAT VICTOR HERBERT, Paramount

Producer-director Andrew L. Stone
Screen play Russel Crouse, Robert Lively
Based on a story by: Robert Lively, Andrew L. Stone.
Music supervisor Phil Boutelje
Music Scorer Arthur Lange
Musical numbers staged by LeRoy Prinz
Director of photography Victor Milner, A.S.C.
Art direction Hans Dreier, Ernst Fegte
Costumes Edith Head
Editor James Smith
Sound recording Hugo Grenzbach, John Cope
Interior decorations A. E. Freundeman
All music Victor Herbert

Cast: Allan Jones, Mary Martin, Walter Connolly, Lee Bowman, Susanna Foster, Judith Barrett, Jerome Cowan, John Garrick, Pierre Watkin, Richard Tucker, Hal K. Dawson, Emmett Vogan, Mary Currier, James Finlayson.

EXCELLENT entertainment. A picture more about Herbert's music than about Herbert himself, but such music is ideal for screen entertainment when reproduced as we have it here, and given additional value as entertainment by being made part of the entertaining story. A picture which consists so largely of music and concerns chiefly three

characters who sing, must be left to Dr. Ussher to review (page 11). To my non-critical music ear, every note sung or bar played was a delight, no matter what Bruno thinks about it.

Twelve or thirteen years ago a young fellow came to me with some stories he had written for the screen. He never had been inside a studio, and he asked me if I would read his material and tell him if in my judgement he could do anything useful if he did get into one. I saw promise in his stories and in what he said about his screen ambitions. I forget now how he managed it, but he made a picture, and in my review I praised it and predicted a glowing film career for the young man. But he got nowhere in Hollywood, made a living for some years at something else, finally came back to the film capital and again tackled pictures. The young fellow's name was Andrew L. Stone.

Andrew L. Stone Arrives

¶ A week ago last Monday Andy Stone added his name in large, indelible letters to the scroll of those who have won important places in the film world. Assigned by his chief, William LeBaron, to do a picture about Victor Herbert, he outlined a story, collaborated with Robert Lively in writing it, approved the screen play of Lively and Russell Crouse, produced it, directed it, has given to the world one of the most engaging bits of screen entertainment it has had in years. He has made other pictures, but none as big and fine as *The Great Victor Herbert*.

Revealing a sense of drama, of human values, of characterization and music appreciation, Andy makes playthings of our emotions and puts us in debt to him for a rare cinematic treat. Especially fortunate was he in the selection of his cast, every member of which responds to his direction in a most capable manner. From Allan Jones we could expect only satisfactory acting and superlative singing, from Walter Connolly another of those intelligent and compelling performances which add strength to all the pictures in which he is cast. Two girls make most impressive first appearances, Mary Martin and Susanna Foster. Mary has the ingratiating personality essential to screen success and the ability to express it intelligently. Susanna is destined to develop rare acting ability, and could become a screen favorite even without the aid of her fine singing voice. Lee Bowman, Judith Barrett, Jerome Cowan, in fact, all the others whose names appear in the cast are to be credited with fine performances.

Technicians Deserve Credit

¶ Technically, the picture is up to the best Hollywood standard. Victor Milner's photography is of fine quality and

brings out all the values of the artistic settings designed by Hans Dreier and Ernst Fegte, as well as the beautiful costumes contributed by Edith Head and the interior decorations by A. E. Freudeman. The staging of the musical numbers by LeRoy Prinz played a large part in making the production so visually attractive, and credit is due James Smith for film editing which produces such smooth progression of scenes.

Entertainment for everyone, particularly for one who enjoys a rare combination of music and drama. Motion picture appreciation classes should note the adroit manner in which the musical numbers are woven into the whole fabric without breaking the continuity of audience interest in the story. Lacking in outstanding star names, exhibitors will find it necessary to get behind it energetically, but it will more than make good all the advance exploitation given it.

Too Many Wives, Too Much Footage

FOUR WIVES. Warner Bros.-First National
Executive producer Hal B. Wallis
Associate producer Henry Blanke
Director Michael Curtiz
Screen play: Julius J. and Philip G. Epstein,
and Maurice Hanline.
Suggested by the book, "Sister Act," by Fannie Hurst.
Musical director Leo F. Forbstein
Director of photography Sol Polito, A.S.C.
Art director John Hughes
Film editor Ralph Dawson
Orchestral arrangements: Hugo Friedhofer,
Ray Heindorf.

Cast: Claude Rains, Jeffrey Lynn, Eddie Albert, May Robson, Frank McHugh, Dick Foran, Henry O'Neill, Vera Lewis, John Qualen, Priscilla Lane, Rosemary Lane, Lola Lane, Gale Page.

TOO many wives. Driving four abreast from one end of a picture to the other and keeping the pace even, seems to have been a job too tough for a talented bunch of drivers even when under the guidance of Hal Wallis and one of film-dom's really great associate producers, Henry Blanke. The picture is not a total loss. It will hold your attention in a mild sort of way, but it is stretched out too far for what is in it. A picture gets pretty thin when about sixty minutes of real story value is stretched out to cover 110 minutes of running time. This one becomes somewhat confusing. As a reviewer, I do not strain my attention to keep abreast of what is happening on the screen. I feel it is the duty of the picture to tell its story so clearly no straining is necessary to follow it.

This picture tries to keep our interest divided evenly between four couples and the spirit of the deceased husband of one of the eight people. As I review it mentally to determine what to say about it, I find myself rather muddled. To

follow closely the sequence of complications required more mental concentration than I think one should be asked to exert when viewing something which he seeks as mental relaxation.

Direction Could Be Better

¶ While my general impression is that the picture is pleasant entertainment but somewhat too long, it is not as good as it would have been if Mike Curtiz had given it the high quality direction of which he long since has proven himself capable. In one scene, for instance, the four daughters wake up to the fact that Father's Day has passed and not one of them remembered it. They rush to their father with words of contrite endearment. The father stands in the middle of the room with his face to the camera; the four daughters stand in a row behind him, their faces to the camera, while they tell his back how sorry they are. It beats me how such absurdly distorted grouping can get into a major studio production.

However, there are a number of excellent performances in *Four Wives*. The old standbys repeat the successes achieved when they appeared together previously. Eddie Albert reveals talent which should carry him a long way. And the four girls, of course, are charming. The production, photography, sound, and film editing are of high standard.

Not up to the standard set by Four Daughters, but it has its points. Of little interest to children, but all right for the rest of the family.

Opens With Drink, Ends With Death

THE NIGHT OF NIGHTS. Paramount
Producer George Arthur
Director Lewis Milestone
Original screen play: Donald Ogden Stewart
Photography Leo Tover, A.S.C.
Art direction Hans Dreier, Ernst Fegte
Editor Doane Harrison
Costumes Edith Head
Music score Victor Young
Sound recording: Gene Merritt, Don Johnson
Interior decorations A. E. Freudeman
Cast: Pat O'Brien, Olympe Bradna, Roland Young, Reginald Gardiner, George E. Stone, Murray Alper.

HANDICAPPED by fundamental story weakness in that its success depends upon its ability to make us interested in a wholly uninteresting character. We first see Pat O'Brien beginning a drunken spree before the opening of a Broadway show in which he stars with Roland Young. The two are plastered to the eyebrows as they make their first entrance when the show begins, and they behave so outrageously the curtain is rung down, the show is closed, the careers of the two brought to an abrupt end. Pat's wife, whom we do not see but who was to have her big chance

in the show, leaves him, and there follows a time lapse of twenty years.

We next see Pat, morose, silent, sitting at a table in the Lambs Club, and a line of dialogue informs us that for the first five of the score of years he searched diligently but unsuccessfully for his wife, and for the remaining fifteen apparently had been sitting at the table, a dead thing which still breathed and could mutter sentences. For the greater part of the footage he is that way, and he does not come to life even upon the arrival of his daughter, of whose existence he had been unaware until she was twenty years of age, when he learned also that his wife had died when the child was born.

Technically a Good Job

¶ Donald Ogden Stewart had an idea buried in his original screen play, but it was not an idea upon which a satisfactory motion picture could be based. Everyone connected with its production is to be commended for his honest, sincere effort to turn out a thoughtful, entertaining bit of screen entertainment, but the attempt to keep us interested in a most uninteresting central character proves unsuccessful. In the first sequence we become disgusted with the man O'Brien plays, and during the remainder of the footage we become weary of him and indifferent to what the fates still may have in store for him. His death at the end leaves us unmoved.

No fault can be found with Pat's enactment of the role. His performance is really a brilliant one, but has to carry too much weight. Roland Young, always the capable actor, also is excellent. A charming and talented young miss Olympe Bradna proves to be, one who soon should have a great screen following. George E. Stone, one of Hollywood's finest actors whom we do not see often enough; Reginald Gardiner, always capable, and Murray Alper, also talented, round out the small but completely competent cast. Lewis Milestone's direction is excellent, and none of the picture's weaknesses can be charged to him. Artistic settings are provided by Hans Dreier and Ernst Fegte, fine quality photography by Leo Tover, expert film editing by Doane Harrison.

Printing
Mimeographing
Multigraphing
Typeing

JEANNE EDWARDS

1655 North Cherokee
(at Hollywood Blvd.)
HEmpstead 1969

A big share of whatever satisfaction the picture will give will be due to the fine musical score by Victor Young and its meritorious recording by Soundmen Gene Merritt and Don Johnson.

Technically a wholly creditable job, but it cannot be recommended as popular entertainment. Not for children and I can see nothing in it for study groups. Gets its motivation from a drunken debauch and I never can see merit in drunkenness as a motivating factor in screen entertainment.

Damon Runyon Story Is Highly Original

JOE AND ETHEL TURP CALL ON
THE PRESIDENT
Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer

Producer Edgar Selwyn
Director Robert B. Sinclair
Screen play Melville Baker
Based on a story by Damon Runyon
Musical score Edward Ward, David Snell
Art director Cedric Gibbons
Director of photography Leonard Smith, A.S.C.
Film editor Gene Ruggiero
Cast: Ann Sothorn, Lewis Stone, Walter Brennan, William Gargan, Marsha Hunt, Tom Neal, James Bush, Don Costello, Muriel Hutchison, Jack Norton, Aldrich Bowker, Frederick Burton, Al Shean, Robert Emmett O'Connor, Cliff Clark, Russell Hicks, Paul Everton, Charles Trowbridge.

Reviewed by Bert Harlen

AN ENTERTAINING show results from the visit of Joe and Ethel Turp to the White House. The Damon Runyon piece, adopted to the screen by Melville Baker, is certainly a unique admixture of elements. It is at once a portrait of a slice of Americana and a sly commentary on national and international affairs, keeps two stories going at the same time, and presents strong contrasts in humor and poignancy. Whatever else may be said about *Joe and Ethel Turp Call On the President*, the film must be commended for high originality.

That the Turps manage to see the president with such facility, having appealed to his sense of humor, may seem a trifle far-fetched in retrospect, but it is made to seem plausible enough during the story's unreeling. Of course, the naive Turps need not have visited the President at all; the Postmaster General would have done just as well. It all makes a good yarn, though, and the piece somehow does not invite dissection.

Their Motive Worthy

¶ The urgency of the couple's trip to Washington is created by the predicament into which their mailman has got himself, having been discharged and arrested for destroying a special delivery letter. There are extenuating circumstances, though, plead the Turps before the President, and to make the case fully known to His Honor, they start at the

beginning, when Jim the mailman was a young fellow in love with a girl another fellow got. Their narration is embodied in filmic form, sometimes with their own voices accompanying the action, sometimes with the characters from the past taking over.

It is a tale of much sentiment, of a love that endures into old age and leads the mailman to compose and deliver letters purported to be from the woman's son, really a worthless fellow, in order that the old lady, an invalid, will be made happy. Some of the Turps' own tribulations are interwoven with the narration, an amusing episode being that in which an entertainer in pajamas is discovered in Joe's bedroom, though he is the innocent victim of circumstance, protests Joe. Now and then incidents of the presidential interview are interpolated.

Brennan Again Is Outstanding

¶ Certainly the Turps are an amusing pair. One wonders, though, if a more effective film would not have resulted if their mannerisms and antics were not given such a highlighting, if their amusing aspect did not contrast so widely with the essentially pathetic tone of the story related in flash-back. After all, there is also an aspect of pathos to the awkwardly groping Turps, as there is to their many counterparts; indeed, as there is, in some degree, to all of us.

Ann Sothorn and William Gargan are ideally cast for the pair, manage the Brooklyn lingo and mannerisms in a very comical way. The outstanding performance, though, is that of Walter Brennan, who makes an extraordinary transition from youth to old age, and invests a part which might have been a trifle maudlin with often moving humanness.

She Surprises Us

¶ Marsha Hunt is a complete surprise as the girl of his heart, aging into a sweet old lady with admirable proficiency. It is inherently admirable characterization, and if dat ol' debil camera sometimes partly unmasks her youth, it is because the old boy is a relentlessly prying fellow and extremely hard to fool.

Wisely, no attempt is made to duplicate the President. Lewis Stone creates a president of his own, a representative high type of American, possessed of a strong sense of humor. Direction by Robert Sinclair is capable throughout. Cedric Gibbons and his associates have given us an attractive White House interior and a picturesque Brooklyn. Photography and the musical score are of good calibre.

A picture of unusual invention, in which Damon Runyon's characters, Joe and Ethel Turp, call on the President. There is a good bit of humor in it and some successful pathos too.

Vocalist Breen Depicts A Latin

ESCAPE TO PARADISE, RKO

Associate producer Barney Briskin
Director Erle C. Kerton
Screen play Weldon Melick
Original story Ian Hunter, Herbert C. Lewis
Musical director Victor Young
Songs: "Tra-La-La" and "Rhythm of the Rio,"
by Nilo Menendez, Edward Cherkose.
Director of photography Charles Schoenbaum
Art director Lewis J. Rachmil
Film editor Arthur Hilton
Cast: Bobby Breen, Kent Taylor, Marla Shelton, Joyce Compton, Pedro de Cordoba, Robert O. Davis, Rosina Galli, Frank Yaconelli, Anna Demetrio.

Reviewed by Bert Harlen

ALL right as a programer. No great care has gone into the making of the new Bobby Breen offering, there are some rough edges hanging out in nearly all phases of production. The story, however, if rather obviously contrived in places and possessed of a few slow spots, is entertaining in a light way, bolstered by frequent interludes of song.

A South American country is the locale, where a young American tourist is inveigled by circumstance into buying a considerable quantity of mate, a South American tea, having presented himself as a New York dealer in order to have an excuse for meeting the planter's comely daughter. The American's guide, Bobby Breen, an imaginative lad, spreads the word around that the visitor is intent on buying up all the mate in the district, with the result that the fellow becomes a fêted hero.

Spanish Language Freely Used

¶ The lovers seem smitten by the authors rather than by Dan Cupid, and the circumstances of the American's becoming a local hero seem a little forced, but the plot suffices for a musical production. Portions are fairly amusing, and the piece affords numerous opportunities for interjecting song. One whole scene is done in Spanish, and Bobby does considerable singing in the language, factors which should be assets for South American bookings, as will a ringing address by the American in which he advocates a greater unity and more extensive trade relations between the Americas.

Bobby assumes a Spanish dialect in a natural and humorous way. He does well in the part, stands out despite that the plot actually centers about others. The preview audience seemed to go for the boy's falsetto and heavy-of-vibrato singing. My own reaction is that he is getting to be a good sized lad now and could begin to cut down on the "schmalz." His singing of one number in straight English, incidentally, quite abandoning the dialect, seemed rather

too much of a liberty, even for a musical.

Musical Direction Able

¶ Kent Taylor gives a lithe and whimsical performance as the tourist, and Marla Shelton is decorative as the senorita. Erle Kenton's direction is satisfactory. The best technical contribution is that of Victor Young's, who has handled the music capably.

Evidences of a limited budget are to be seen in the staging, though one or two of the sets are expansive and generously peopled. The stepped-up photography, resorted to during Bobby's motorcycle episodes, is a slapstick device, and cheapens a picture. A noticeably poor piece of editing comes at the very end, when three performers assume a seated pose between one note of a song and another. The fault may lie in the shooting, of course.

If you are a devotee of Bobby Breen's singing, you will get a good deal of it here, much of it in the Spanish language. The lad assumes a Spanish accent too, and with humorous effect. The story is acceptable for a musical, the staging adequate for a lower budget film.

Detective-Fiance Again Outwitted

PRIVATE DETECTIVE, a First National Picture
Associate producer Bryan Foy
Screen play Earle Snell, Raymond Schrock
From a story by Kay Krause
Director Noel Smith
Director of photography Ted McCord, A.S.C.
Art director Stanley Fleischer
Film editor Harold McLernon
Cast: Jane Wyman, Dick Foran, Gloria Dickson, Maxie Rosenbloom, John Ridgely, Morgan Conway, John Eldredge, Joseph Crehan, William Davidson, Vera Lewis, Julie Stevens, Jack Mower, Henry Blair, Earl Dwire, Willie Best.

Reviewed by Bert Harlen

NOTHING out of the ordinary, but a lively tempoed little picture, with fairly good playing. A murder mystery, the film is competently plotted, and considerable suspense is realized here and there. The ingredients are familiar, of course, about a young woman detective who consistently outwits her boy friend, a police detective, assigned to the same case—a la *Torchy Blaine*. That he could retain any love for her after being made a thorough dunce of, is indeed testimony to the efficacy of Cupid's dart.

There are a few little holes to be poked in the yarn if you want to take the trouble, but you are not supposed to be that critical. The offering will be shown in conjunction with a better grade of film, and the production theory behind this one apparently is that you cannot expect too much at bargain prices.

Jane Wyman has made noticeable strides in the art of Thespis since I last saw her. It is a good comedy performance she gives here, scintillating and assured, a factor that does much to make acceptable the supreme cleverness of the girl she portrays. Dick Foran spends most of his time being chagrined, is efficient at it. Gloria Dickson's dramatic performance would have been improved by the absence of the long artificial eyelashes and a more judicious use of the grease pots. She does not seem like the same actress who recently gave such a genuine portrayal opposite John Garfield.

Director Noel Smith's scenes are rather well worked out. Bryan Foy has not stinted on the staging. There is much of background music. The sets are elegant indeed. The yarn, incidentally, came from Kay Krause, and was screen-played by Earle Snell and Raymond Schrock.

A detective yarn of B grade, as good as the run of them.

Romantic Indeed Is The Cisco Kid

THE CISCO KID AND THE LADY
Twentieth Century-Fox

Associate producer John Stone
Director Herbert I. Leeds
Screen play Frances Hyland
Original story Stanley Rauh
Suggested by the character, "The Cisco Kid," created by William Sydney Porter (O. Henry).
Art direction Richard Day, Chester Gore
Director of photography Barney McGill, A.S.C.
Film editor Nick De Maggio
Musical direction Samuel Kaylin
Cast: Cesar Romero, Marjorie Weaver, Chris-Pin Martin, George Montgomery, Robert Barrat, Virginia Field, Harry Green, Gloria Ann White, John Beach, Ward Bond, J. Anthony Hughes, James Burke, Harry Hayden, James Flavin, Ruth Warren.

Reviewed by Bert Harlen

A SOMEWHAT glorified Western. The characters are more rounded than in the run of such operas, situations are cleverer, there is a good deal of humor, but at heart *The Cisco Kid and the Lady* is thoroughly loyal to the ridin' and shootin' genre. It has that frank dedication to heroics and excitements which is a prepossessing quality in the Western. There are numerous little liberties taken with verisimilitude, but they will not bother you if you are in the spirit of the thing; and you will probably come around.

The piece is as romantic and gusty a yarn as you will have seen. Stanley Rauh has wound a highly eventful tale about the O. Henry character and Frances Hyland has got all the robustness and humor into the screen play, perhaps added some. The appellation "skunk" flies freely.

¶ A more glamorous Kid than any of his predecessors emerges, a sort of superman as adept at the tango as at intrigue and as facile at love-making as at song, a thoroughly keen, accomplished, and irresistible fellow. Quite a man. Cesar Romero is wholly equal to the task of embodying all the Kid's attributes. It is an easy, graceful performance. If at times he comes perilously close to untentiousness, it is largely because the part is too heavily loaded with élan and fervor. The role would probably benefit by letting the fellow experience some heavier emotions. Unalloyed debonairness and cleverness can become a bit cloying.

There is a substantial supporting cast. Marjorie Weaver does engagingly what she has to do. She should not noticeably have penciled her eyes, though; school marms in those days didn't. Claudette Colbert presents us with the same anachronism as a pioneer woman in *Drums Along the Mohawk*.

She Succumbs Too

¶ Impressively tempestuous is Virginia Field as a fiery and seasoned cabaret entertainer who melts as readily as have a legion of others before the fervid "line" of the Kid. At the concluding fade-out she rides after him, and the two disappear into the sunset together, along with Chris-Pin Martin. Maybe the three are to be seen in further operas. Chris-Pin Martin has never been more spontaneously amusing than here. There is humor in Robert Barrat's typification of the stock handlebar-mustached villain. George Montgomery is satisfactory, needs a little more experience.

Considerable of the flavor and humor of the show is traceable to the direction of Herbert Leeds, perhaps the best work he has done. One of his most responsive players, incidentally, is a baby, Gloria Ann White by name, who is prominently cast and frequently captivating.

Scenic investiture is colorful, photography good. In fact, Cinematographer Barney McGill rates a plum for an extraordinary composition shot in which the baby, in the middle of a road, is

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narrowly missed by a stage coach, swerving just in time. I hope it was a composition shot. The musical score of Samuel Kaylin is atmospheric. An apparent slip in the editing comes to mind, in which Barrat is seen in a long shot pointing a rifle at a wagon in the distance. In the following close-up, he speaks before he raises the gun.

A Cisco Kid more dashing, accomplished, and cleverer than any of his predecessors is here to be seen, and there is a gusty tale wound around him. It is all stuff, but you may find it diverting.

Prison Melodrama Is Merely Grim

THE BIG GUY, Universal Pictures

Director Arthur Lubin
 Producer Burt Kelly
 Screen play Lester Cole
 Based on a story by: Wallace Sullivan, Richard K. Polimer.
 Director of photography Elwood Bredel, A.S.C.
 Art director Jack Otterson
 Associate art director Charles H. Clarke
 Film editor Philip Cahn
 Musical director H. J. Salter
 Cast: Victor McLaglen, Jackie Cooper, Edward Brophy, Peggy Moran, Ona Munson, Russell Hicks, Jonathan Hale, Edward Pawley, George McKay.

Reviewed by Bert Harlen

AGAIN we are shown into the dread bowels of a prison. Only here the drama is grim without being either significant or forcefully melodramatic. The offering is pretty much of a fiasco from any aspect. Its story is fabricated, unconvincing, the playing generally undistinguished. From the time the lad is innocently sent to the big house, we know it is only a matter of reels until the warden breaks down and confesses that he knows the lad was forced at the point of a gun to drive the truck in which two prisoners were escaping, and that he (the warden) contended he was unconscious during the entire ride because he had gotten his hands on a bag of money after a smash-up and, with the other passengers dead or unconscious, had hidden it.

The fact that a drawing for a new motor, needed to substantiate the boys' plea of innocence, turns out to be the paper in which the warden has wrapped the money, is a good narrative twist, presents an effective bit of irony, but that is the only merit of the story. Some of the scenes were so improbable as to cause snickers.

No Oscars for Anyone

¶ As the warden, Victor McLaglen appears to be doing just what Director Arthur Lubin tells him too. Supposedly torn by inner conflict in one scene, the actor's grimace was so ludicrous as to provoke a round of laughter. Jackie

Copper, than whom, as I have asserted before, there is no better juvenile player in pictures, works earnestly, is forceful in a spot or two, but the performance will not add to his cinematic stature.

Edward Brophy is professional as a heavy, and as much can be said for Ona Munson, none too appropriately cast as the warden's wife. Jonathan Hale makes the best of an insignificant part. Technical phases are all right.

A very grim drama during which the audience laughs at the wrong places. As for the children—have you interested them in making divinity with walnuts?

This Hollywood

By Bert Harlen

COMES to the screen the ballet in *On Your Toes*, new Warner opus. Other films have given us ballet exhibitions in the abstract, as it were, but none that I recall presented a story told through the dance. In this picture there are two tales recounted through the art of Terpsichore. Both aim not so much to glorify the ballet as to satirize it—at least one does; I was not sure about the other—but you can get the effect of dance-drama on the screen.

Though undoubtedly shortened from their running time in the Broadway show, the two numbers seem very long on the screen, and deprived of some of the color and sparkle they must have had on the stage. Here we feel the dancers are taking too much time to tell their story and are telling it in a cumbersome way. Yes, "cumbersome" is the word.

Art Forms Confused

¶ The dance itself certainly has a place on the screen, since it places before the camera rhythmic patterns, and rhythm is one of the most important elements of the cinema art. Few sights are more pleasing to see on the screen than a graceful dance routine.

As for telling a story through the dance, however, here we get into a piling up of art forms. The camera itself is a story telling medium. To relate with the camera a story of dancers relating a story with their art, is like telling a tale of another man telling a tale.

On the screen actors do not unfold a story, but pictures of actors do. There is a big difference.

* * *

ROUND AND ROUND THEY GO

MUCH space in the trade publications continues to be occupied by distributor-exhibitor controversy. A glance into the current weekly *Variety* presents a complexity of viewpoints, of charges and counter-charges, brought to a head

by trepidation resulting from the loss of European markets. Distributors, in line with a recent recommendation of Joseph Schenck, feel the exhibitors should cooperate with longer runs; exhibitors have retorted "give us the pictures." The only point on which there appears to be any common agreement is that there might be benefit in making fewer pictures, a recommendation also advanced by Schenck, incidentally. Probably there is not full accord even here. And "fewer" is not very definite.

Murray Silverstone, who directs world-wide operations for United Artists, feels that "every consideration" from exhibitors is imperative, else they may even find themselves in the difficult position of having no films to exhibit at all, since the theatre chains affiliated with producer-distributors may have to start draining their own product to the full if a dwindling in the flow of films appears likely.

Months Ahead Critical

¶ Box office returns during the next few months will tell the tale, he maintains. If the income is not sufficient, producers will have to realign investments, and this curtailment is likely to result in lessened quality as well as quantity of output. There be some theatre-owners who "don't have the slightest conception of our problems," believes Silverstone.

Exhibitors, however, viewing with vexation the heady Hollywood salaries—still heady, despite magnanimous salary cuts—and piqued by a market flooded with dull quickies, will not take kindly to the gentleman's admonition. So it goes, round and round.

Mo Wax Sits In

¶ The best reflection of the independent exhibitor's outlook is to be found in the editorials of Mo Wax in his *Film Bulletin*. Recently he cited the attitude of exhibitors at a meeting he attended of the Allied unit of independent exhibitors in Philadelphia. Unanimously they voted to seek elimination of dual bills in their territory. How it is to be done perplexes them, though.

Says one exhibitor, "The chain house in my neighborhood milks the good ones dry and leaves the others clear for me—but who wants to see the others? When I play some of those 'dogs' as singles, I hide in my office for fear the few patrons will demand their money back. At least, two features is a bargain and nobody expects much quality in a bargain basement."

Urged to Take a Stand

¶ Another exhibitor says he paid \$2,000 last season for films he did not show. Eventually passage of the Neely Bill will substantially solve these problems of industrial maladjustment. In
(Continued on page 12)

Film Music and Its Makers

BY
BRUNO DAVID USSHER

Peace On Earth

¶ Christmas season and the shocking turn of events abroad lend timeliness to a one-reel MGM cartoon, *Peace On Earth*, in which Scott Bradley has interwoven various carols in an engaging manner. As in his earlier cartoon scores, Bradley uses musical effects wherever he can in place of mere physical sound, as he has done so cleverly in a short color-cartoon, *The Goldfish*. How well the industry thinks of *Peace On Earth*—produced by Hugh Harman, who is in charge of MGM's cartoon department and writes most of the "action"—is indicated by the fact that this short will precede *Gone With the Wind* when that super-spectacle is world-premiered at Atlanta. Locally it will be released next week. I believe cartoons, calling as they do for continuous music background, will have a definite effect on the amount of music in full length pictures.

In *Peace On Earth* the only non-musical sound, apart from dialogue, is the crashing of shells. Once or twice the street carols, when heard in the squirrel home, should sound less loud than outdoors, but that is a small matter. Bradley's craftsmanship in musical miniatures is exemplified once more. For instance, he uses nothing but a low viola tremolo over deeply beating kettle-drums as the last two men in the world die in battle. As they sink down even the violas cease and finally even the drums merge into a silence that grows tense, although it lasts but ten seconds.

No need to mention the fine use of English horn, celeste, trumpet and strings. The various carols can be easily recognized. None of Bradley's one-reel scores exceeds 425-450 measures, according to the tempo. But they embody an amount of feeling and skill to warrant giving him screen credit. What would a cartoon be without music?

* * *

Thanks to Two Stones

¶ This is to give thanks to two "stones," Producer - Director Andrew Stone for his newest musical, *The Great Victor Herbert*, and to the music department chief, Louis Lipstone, for watching over so finely-balanced, well-sounding a recording. It is one of the best from Paramount. I am grateful to Producer Stone for his continued faith in "musicals" of an order in which married people quarrel about something else than a pair of glamor-legs belonging to a third party. I see that some of the Los Angeles reviewers think the plot—which I will not tell—a little familiar. What of it? Life is that way, in Hollywood of all places, where congenial men

and women agree to separate because of career reasons.

The picture is staged most faithfully with due regard for all the mohair-covered tastes and horsehair-upholstered manners of the better middle-class. The now historic ugliness of fashion and broad-tracked emotions of that time are well preserved visually and musically. It would have been tempting to make Herbert's music a little spicier than it is, in keeping with present jitterizations, but the two "corner stones" of the production rested firmly in their faith in the original.

Many Melodies

¶ Some thirty of Herbert's finest melodies are embodied in a score accompanied by the following credits in addition to Lipstone's name: music supervisor, Philip Boutelje; scorer, Arthur Lange; vocal arrangements, Max Terr; dance numbers, Leroy Prinz; orchestral conductor, Arthur Kay. There is a great deal of singing, almost too much singing in a picture of medium length. One is particularly glad to hear again Allan Jones, who has done so well for MGM and for whom that studio did less well by not finding proper assignments. Paramount introduces two new women singers. Mary Martin, a really fine artist vocally, possessing a lovely mezzo soprano, and young Susanna Foster, heralded because of her high notes. Singing in general could have been emotionally more alive. I like light moods to be exhilarating, with a little more abandon of expression.

Allan Jones is still the best tenor on the screen. His voice sounded well, his tones darker of timbre than usual, which may have been the result of observant sound engineering, whereby his and the Martin voice blended effectively. Those who like altitudinous tones will applaud Susanna Foster, shild soprano of very fine means, which, I hope, she retains. She is a "find," no doubt, but she herself can find yet better enunciation. It is an all-Herbert score and the Herbert fans will glory in it, even though in his buxom days the popular Irish-American lord of melodies was not quite so solemn a personage as exemplified here. A great picture for Herbert fans.

* * *

Hurrah for Destry

¶ And hurrah for horse opera, as the Westerns are called sometimes in good-natured spirit of mockery. Universal's *Destry Rides Again* is full of the most sage-brush-scented tunes and songy tinkle of the range heard since Wanger's *Stage Coach*. It speaks irresistibly to my fugue-infested ears. Frank Skinner

has not only chosen the right type of music for this fun-and-gun crowded saga of the raucously living prairie metropolis of Bottleneck; he has managed to make it into something as essentially atmospheric as the settings themselves. George Marshall, who directed the picture, evidently let him have his way, and Music Director Charles Previn succeeded in balancing the roaring and whooping of vociferous Bottlenecks (which is what their prototypes must have been) with the music.

The faint banjo strumming coming from the saloon downstairs while a desperate card game is being played for a man's ranch upstairs, is quite telling. And there is the tough singing of that brazen Jezebel of Bottleneck, none other than Marlene Dietrich. If one recalls her velvety, purring songs in *The Blue Angel*, then one will award her a prize for vocal realism now that she waves her frontier-parched voice with a broad glare like a red and coarse-cottoned bandana. At first I thought she sounded a bit too "torchy" and modern of tone in a picture so evidently of a period when Greeley (or was it Dana?) advised young men to go west. She sings three songs: *Little Joe the Wrangler*, *The Boys In the Back Room* and *You've Got That Look*, quite of the old ballad type, especially the first two. Frank Loesser wrote the lyrics and Felix Hollaender, he of the kid-gloved, patent-leathered society picture, scores the music. They knocked the spots off 'em with their team work, just as Destry when he chose to shoot.

* * *

Enter: La Massey

¶ Operating on the plausible principle that nothing succeeds like success, Hollywood is opening its doors wide to singers, so-called "musicals," as screen-operettas are called, finding new vogues with the men in charge of production policies. This renewed trend in favor of singing stars may be attributed to MGM's consistent policy in that direction. RKO and 20th Century-Fox have fairly steadily kept up the race for musical comedy honors on the screen. MGM is about to release *Balalaika*, featuring Ilona Massey as the female lead for vocal laurels on the Culver City lot. I have pinned my faith on her since she sang something not important in the super-terrific *Rosalie* of lamentable colossality. I am preening myself since being told that Ernest Lubitsch considers La Massey (which is not the real name of the Hungarian artist), "the best, biggest and most vivid singing-acting talent in Hollywood." And Lubitsch should know. Indeed, my informant

says, Lubitsch wants to solo-star Made-moiselle Illona as soon as she has fulfilled his immediate two-picture contract for United Artists.

* * *

Gentle and Yet More

¶ Background music for *We Are Not Alone* demonstrates engagingly that music need not be heavy of touch to be emotionally emphatic. Composer Max Steiner and his orchestrator, Hugo Friedhofer, have emulated with artistic fidelity the general deftness of touch with which Producer-Director Henry Blanke has bared human tragedy in this picture. It is a story of a good man crushed between the coarse and inexorable milestones of small-town convention, and hard-hearted propriety which turns real human decency into murder of soul and body. It is a deadly conflict between human natures too far apart to come to terms.

It is the story of the trial and the doom of people who do not belong together, and whose pitiful, guiltless failures are judged traditionally by a court of public opinion and law, instead of being tended by psychiatrists. All this has been taken into account by Steiner, who writes tenderly, using bits of folk songs, of Mozart, Haydn and Schubert, if memory does not fail me. Quite personally speaking, I do not relish the obvious change of *Kommt a Vogerl* into a dirge when the victims of unawareness are sentenced to die. I liked greatly the merry-go-round background music for the scene of quiet conversation between the doctor and the girl. On other occasions, too, Steiner has written apart from the visual scene, and with notable results of suggestion.

* * *

More Than Effective

¶ Albert Sendrey's background score for *Whirlpool of Desire* (shown at Cinema Arts Theatre) makes me curious to know other music he has written for the screen. The whole film leaves much to the imagination in the best sense of the word. The music hints at what is going on in the hearts of the chief personages. Sendrey never waxes complex musically. He does exhibit himself in that part of film-dramatic no-man's land which the author, Peggy Thompson, leaves undescribed as far as actual dialogue goes.

At times, dialogue is duly laconic and music adds what need not be said in so many words. Occasionally I missed the help of orchestral underscoring. Very neat is the sequence of the inspection of the dam, when a waltz is made to serve also as a tone picture for unseen men and engineers at work. The waltz serves as one of the emotionally significant key themes, but I could have wished for something strong musically to accompany the symbolic shots of turbulent water which allegorize visually the tur-

moil in a human soul. It is a well recorded and engagingly simple score which definitely aids the picture. The composer, a Los Angeles man, confirms my suspicions that the score was cut when the picture was re-edited in America. Sendrey bears watching.

* * *

Lovely Voice

¶ *PERHAPS* it is MGM studio policy to keep lyric soprano Florence George sound-tight, at least as far as the screen is concerned. Perhaps the Georgian state of "protective custody" is the result of story-differences of opinion. I have been told that fully half a dozen tales have been proposed, but no quorum could be reached among those who decided the filmic fates of the fair singer. Which is a pity. La George (in private life Mrs. Everett Crosby), however, is not letting any grass grow under her . . . vocal chords. She is working daily with vocal maestro Charles Dalmores and coach-pianist Sylvan Breen.

Bennett Returns

¶ Russell Bennett, for years arranger and orchestral collaborator with Jerome Kern, is back from New York City where *Very Warm for May*, the new Kern-Hammerstein musicale, was considered warm enough also for New York in November. I watched him listening to the orchestra rehearse a quite difficult sequence, looking a bit quizzical and pained and pleased in turn. The sequence was from *Bluebird* and the highly atmospheric orchestration by Conrad Salinger, for the last several years staff-orchestrator at Twentieth Century-Fox.

* * *

Mr. Malotte's Luck

¶ Considering that Albert Hay Malotte's songs (a whole group of them, old and new ones) have been sung by John Charles Thomas at Carnegie Hall and on tour, I am not surprised that Malotte will do the songs the baritone sings in *Kingdom Come*, which Sig Schlager is producing for Producers' Corporation. Schirmer is publishing five new Malotte chansons: *Among the Living*, a timely lullaby, which I predict will be heard much. (It will be on the Tibbett tour program). *One, Two Three* was written for Nelson Eddy, whose tour program includes another Malotte novelty: *Melody of My Love*. The other two titles are *Miracle* and *The Poor Old Man*.

Malotte has also sold to Schirmer's a piano piece: *Chanson Pastorale*. He is a versatile, genuine melodist whose top-hits includes such contrasted topics as *Ferdinand the Bull* (for Disney) and *23rd Psalm*. Malotte just wrote part of the music of Paramount's *Dr. Cyclops*. I have had faith in him since Gertrude Ross, when ballet committee chairman for the Hollywood Bowl, produced his *Red Riding Hood* score with La Gam-

tarelli dancing. I think Schlager made a good choice in Malotte. The public is welcoming more sensitive background music for underscoring of film. It will enjoy a change from song-tunes, most of which are written with an eye on dance band royalties. A change from hoofing to real heart tunes would be nice.

Here and There

¶ Producer Lee Garmes has signed Frank Tours as musical director for *And So Goodby* at RKO. Tours will later work at *Kingdom Come*.

Aaron Copland expects to finish his score for the Hal Roach-Milestone film *Of Mice and Men*, by the middle of next month. Irvin Talbot will conduct the recordings. He does most of them at Paramount when composers are better with a pen than with a stick. Virginia Wright of the *Daily News* sized up Copland well when suggesting that 20th-Century Fox sign him to compose background music for *Grapes of Wrath*.

Werner Heyman, former music director for UFA of Berlin, is being kept busy by Nat Finston, MGM's music chief. Heyman is at work on two important productions by Lubitsch and Saville. He also was responsible for music in Garbo's *Ninotchka*.

THIS HOLLYWOOD

(Continued from page 10)

the meantime, though, what is to be done? Mo Wax urges exhibitor organizations to take a concerted stand and serve notice now on film exchanges that none of their members will contract for more than 30 features from any company next season. Producers would have nearly a full season to readjust their schedules.

It is impossible for any studio to turn out more than 30 features of a calibre worthy of being presented to the public, he contends. Limitation to this number would result in immediate improvement in the quality of films in general. Once quickies are eliminated, double bills will go "the way of the buffalo." Public appetite for films would be revived. "30 Is The Top — And No Quickies!" he advances as a slogan for next season's buying. Sounds pretty logical.

* * *

A FOOLISH PRODUCTION WASTE

Two *Rip Van Winkle* productions are to reach the screen, from all appearances. Twentieth Century-Fox announces its intention of making the legend, despite an earlier announcement by the independent Monogram, which plans to film the tale as a *pièce de résistance*, sinking its highest budget yet into the production. Why not give the little fellow a break?

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Books and Films

BY
INA ROBERTS

Illinois Parent and Teacher Projects

¶ Mr. J. Kay White, chairman of the Visual Education Committee of the Illinois Congress of Parents and Teachers, when requesting that *Spectator* Book-Film Panels be loaned him, asked that he might be allowed to keep these an extra three weeks in order to display them at twenty additional meetings at which he or one of his committee was scheduled to speak. He has since written that the panels have been enjoyed by more than 2000 persons.

In response to my request he gives the projects being developed by his committee: 1. Present the meaning and show the value of such aids as drawings, exhibits, models, motion pictures, etc. 2. Encourage the establishment and projection of state, regional, county and city film and slide libraries. 3. Assist educational institutions in sponsoring conferences on visual education and motion pictures. 4. Organize clubs among young people to produce still and motion pictures for public relations programs. 5. Promote the study of motion picture appreciation and discrimination in school and home by suggesting motion picture courses as part of curriculums. 6. Assist recreational groups with visual type of programs. 7. Read, study and support Federal legislation endorsed by the National Congress of Parents and Teachers. 8. Recommend the establishment of courses on visual education and motion pictures in colleges as an in-service training for teachers and administrators. 9. Study local school taxes and budgets and cooperate with the Board of Education and Superintendent. 10. Interest parents to organize study groups on vital subjects.

Books and Films

¶ We are indebted to *The Saturday Review of Literature* for permission to quote from an editorial in its issue of August 26th entitled *Books and Movies*. "A correspondent to one of the newspapers recently commented on the fact that a New York motion picture house he attended had on display a row of books. It has always seemed to us that the publishers are missing an opportunity by not tying up their works more closely with current productions. . . . More and more the film is turning to historic incident for its episode and more and more there must be desire for information on the events described." The prevailing tendency toward the historic in films proves also the accuracy of a favorite saying of mine—Truth is stranger than fiction and far more interesting. Were this not so, history would not figure so prominently in films, which, to win the public must, before all else, be interesting.

Our Book-Film Panels

¶ On November 28th an exhibit of the *Spectator* Book-Film Panels was on view at a meeting of the Opera and Fine Arts Club of Los Angeles (Mrs. J. F. Anderson, president). The occasion was a social and program affair held in the ballroom of the Royal Palms Hotel. The panels shown aroused much interest. The films featured were *Danger Flight*, *Disputed Passage*, *Drums Along the Mohawk*, *Five Little Peppers and How They Grew*, *The Great Victor Herbert*, *Gulliver's Travels*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *The Light That Failed*, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, *Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex*, *Rulers of the Sea*, *Seventeen*, *Swiss Family Robinson*, *Tower of London* and *We Are Not Alone*.

The *Spectator* Book - Film Panels (28"x22") are loaned free to gatherings of film groups, libraries and schools. Those borrowing the panels are requested to prepay return expressage. The panels consist of film stills and jackets of: 1. The book filmed (if any). 2. Books by the same author. 3. Books connecting with the film through subject. Unless more are especially requested, three panels are loaned at a time. When requesting panels, write to Mrs. Ina Roberts, Books and Films Department, *The Hollywood Spectator*, 6513 Hollywood Boulevard, Hollywood, California.

The Dark Command

¶ Now in production is Republic's *Dark Command*, said to surpass even *Man of Conquest*. This film will picture the life of William Quantrell and his rebellion. John Wayne, Claire Trevor, Walter Pidgeon, Roy Rogers, Marjorie Main and George Hayes head the cast.

More Juvenile Classics

¶ I am quoting from Mrs. Thomas G. Winter's valuable notes, "Out from the Studios" in giving you the following facts about the filmed version of Maeterlinck's *Bluebird*, in which Shirley Temple will star. Mrs. Winter writes: "Most fascinating is the set contrived to build illusion for 'The Land of the Future.' It will have the appearance of being suspended in mid air, its ethereal beauty

stretching out into unlimited space. Part of the set is in the shape of a swan with great wing sails stretching high into the sky." The dream sequences of the film are in color.

Little Orvie

¶ Another juvenile classic in production or soon to be, is *Little Orvie*, made from the story by Booth Tarkington. Cast in this is Johnny Sheffield, the adorable seven-year-old boy who was seen in *Tarzan Finds a Son*. The plot centers around the neighborhood adventures of a harum-scarum boy who upsets community routine with his never-say-die efforts to acquire a dog in the face of parental opposition.

1,000,000 B. C.

1,000,000 B. C., now in production at Hal Roach studios, promises to be a film that is "different." Part of the picture is being filmed in Fire Valley, Nevada. The location seems especially appropriate since the camp fire ashes of the early Fire Valley folk have been cold for hundreds of centuries. Paleontologists have found Fire Valley a happy hunting ground. Remains of Giant Ground Sloths and other extinct mammals, also traces of earlier dinosaurs have been excavated and are on exhibition in museums. A small institution near Overton has many of the Valley's fossil yield. Some of the vanished monsters revived on the screen once roamed this same sector, beasts like Tynannosaurus, Triceratops and the Mastodon.

I Married Adventure

¶ From the monster mammals of prehistoric times to the wild animals of today pictured in coming film, *I Married Adventure*, is a far cry in time. This picture, filmed entirely in Africa, climaxes twenty years of adventure of Osa (Mrs. Martin) Johnson in the dark continent. Forty-two specimens of wild life were trapped by the camera for this film. The book, "I Married Adventure," by Mrs. Johnson, will be published next month by the J. B. Lippincott Company.

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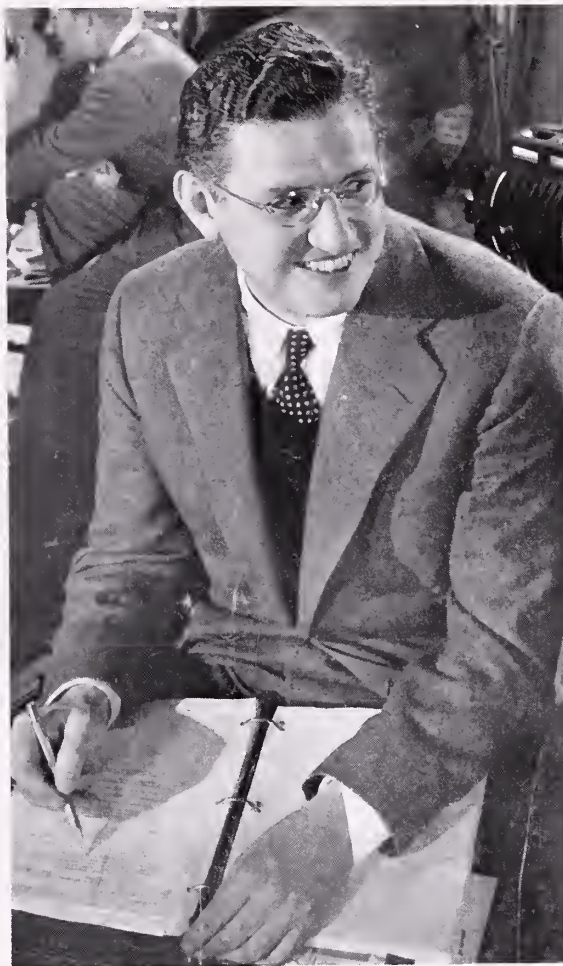
Every Other Week

Edited by WELFORD BEATON

Fourteenth Year

Los Angeles, California, January 6, 1940

Vol. 14—No. 19



DAVID OLIVER SELZNICK
The Great Picture Producer Who Made of
"Gone With the Wind"
The Screen's Greatest Achievement

REVIEWED:
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The Light That Failed ★
The Earl of Chicago ★
Charlie McCarthy, Detective ★
Thou Shalt Not Kill ★

Raffles ★
Swanee River ★
★
★

★
★
Everything Happens at Night
Gulliver's Travels

Of Mice and Men
Invisible Stripes



From the **EDITOR'S EASY CHAIR**

EDITOR'S SECRETARY EXPLAINS

I AM Mr. Beaton's secretary. I take his dictation, which is fast; I transcribe his handwriting, which is awful; I try to make him keep his appointments, which is impossible; he says I boss him, which is ridiculous; even the combined bossing attempts of Mrs. Spectator and me have proved futile.

Mr. Beaton has gone away with Mrs. Spectator for two weeks. He left a note on my typewriter: "You've copied enough of my stuff to be able to fill the 'Easy Chair' pages yourself. Go to it. And don't dare send any mail to me, telephone me or telegraph me before we get back from where you don't know we're going."

Fancy that! Fancy my writing about pictures I don't have time to see! What do I know about too much dialogue, too loud reading of dialogue, filmic motion, screen art, whether this or that picture will be good box-office, and all the other things my boss is always writing about?

I could write something about a perfectly gorgeous gown I saw in Harry Cooper's window on Hollywood Boulevard. It is an evening gown of blue chiffon with a wide silver sequin girdle. With a white fox cape it would make a perfectly divine outfit with which to slay my boy friend on New Year's Eve.

Or I might write some choice gossip. Did you hear about the star's wife who—

No, Mr. Beaton would not like that.

I think the "Easy Chair" readers will have to wait until the Editor gets back. It will be in time for the next Spectator.—Grace.

The Ones Look Like

Ronald Colman In

Best Performance

THE LIGHT THAT FAILED, Paramount

Producer-director.....William A. Wellman
Screen play.....Robert Carson
Based on the novel by.....Rudyard Kipling
Director of photography: Theodor Sparkuhl, ASC.

Art direction.....Hans Dreier, Robert Odell
Editor.....Thomas Scott
Music score.....Victor Young
Interior decorations.....A. E. Freudenman

Cast: Ronald Colman, Walter Huston, Muriel Angelus, Ida Lupino, Dudley Digges, Ernest Cossart, Ferike Boros, Pedro de Cordoba, Colin Tapley, Fay Helm, Ronald Sinclair, Sarita Wooton, Halliwell Hobbes, Charles Irwin, Francis McDonald, George Regas, Wilfred Roberts.

Reviewed by W. B.

ONE to put on your list of pictures to see. As a story it will interest you, and as an example of brilliant screen craftsmanship it will please you greatly. It has many excellent qualities, but the two which stand out are the performance of Ronald Colman and the direction of William Wellman. As a whole it is a psychological study made entertaining by the manner in which it is presented. Ronald proves ideal casting for the leading part, that of a soldier-artist who loses his eyesight after he ceases to be soldier and becomes wholly an artist. It is his reaction to this great affliction which makes the picture so engrossingly dramatic.

As I recall those I can of the roles Ronald Colman has played in the past dozen years, I would rate his *Light That Failed* performance as the finest, most discerning and powerful he has given us. In this picture he still is the pleasant gentleman, a quality he retains even when he is on the border of becoming a drunkard, but he adds to it a realization of dramatic values which strengthens his standing as one of the most accomplished actors.

Wellman Excels Himself

William Wellman's direction is masterly, revealing a power he previously had not attained. He is equally compelling in mass shots and intimate scenes, in the latter being particularly adept in establishing characterizations and advancing the story by subtle gestures, glances, composition and movement. In no instance does he resort to established screen conventions or lay himself open to the charge of having done something because it always has been done that way. One interesting shot is that in which Walter Huston

is leaving the room in which he has been visiting Ronald; as he reaches the door, a mirror on the wall beside it picks up Ronald, thus making the scene complete without resort to a camera change. Another striking contribution by Wellman is the manner in which he makes us believe we are looking at real people living their lives, not actors playing parts.

Robert Carson's screen play is an able bit of writing, even though it is a bit slow in giving us a clue to the direction in which the story is heading. It will be clear to those who are familiar with Kipling's original, but others will be in doubt until the element of impending blindness which is to afflict the artist begins to take form. It is a somber story coming at a time when the world is somber, a factor which may effect the box-office fate of the picture in spite of its dramatic power and human appeal.

Noteworthy Performances

With such direction as Wellman gives, only excellent performances could be expected. Walter Huston, Ida Lupino, Dudley Digges, Ernest Cossart are to be credited with fine work which is equalled in fineness by those who play the lesser parts. The picture presents us with a newcomer in the person of Muriel Angelus, who here makes her American film debut, and an auspicious debut it proves to be. Cossart plays "Beeton," Ronald's servant, and the first time Ronald called his name loudly, I stood up.

Theodor Sparkuhl's photography is of fine quality, and all the other technical contributions to the picture are of equally high standard.

Recommended to students of the screen as a valuable study in film craftsmanship. Note the quiet simplicity with which dramatic climaxes are built to, and the believable humanness of all the characters. Scarcely for children; no sacrifice of good taste, and exhibitors can promise their patrons Ronald Colman's best performance.

Montgomery Film

Peculiar Indeed

THE EARL OF CHICAGO, MGM

Producer.....Victor Saville
Director.....Richard Thorpe
Screen play.....Lesser Samuels
Story.....Charles de Grandcourt, Gene Fowler
Book.....Brock Williams
Musical score.....Werner R. Heymann
Art director.....Cedric Gibbons

Director of photography.....Ray June, ASC
Film editor.....Frank Sullivan
Cast: Robert Montgomery, Edward Arnold, Reginald Owen, Edmund Gwenn, E. E. Clive, Ronald Sinclair, Norma Varden, Halliwell Hobbes, Ian Wulf, Peter Godfrey, Billy Bevan.

Reviewed by Bert Harlen

A VERY peculiar drama indeed. No heroine. The piece starts out in a comedy vein and ends up with the hero approaching the scaffold. The theme is unusual too, having to do with the metamorphosis of a Chicago gangster boss who inherits a large estate and a title of Earl in England. That is to say, the metamorphosis is under way when the drama takes its somber turn.

By a rather roundabout process does the drama come to the screen, the screen play by Lesser Samuels having been based on a story by Charles de Grandcourt and Gene Fowler, who in turn adapted their work from the book *The Earl of Chicago* by Brock Williams. Or maybe Screen Scriptist Samuels consulted the Williams book too. It is ever so slightly confusing. At any rate, that there were divergent views of the material is evident in the joint handiwork. The idea is original and clever, a few of the scenes are absorbingly entertaining, yet one feels more could have been done with the story as a whole.

Could Have Ended Otherwise

Undoubtedly this tragic turn of the story amounts to a shift in genre. If the ending was to be heavy it should have been prepared for. The execution was the finale of the book too, I am told, but in the film the influences of English tradition and refinement upon the gangster are shown to be so telling, and are depicted with such humor and sensibility, that we rather expect to see him ultimately fall in line with what is expected of him by those dependent on him by virtue of his high position, and some spectators may be disappointed by the outcome. One feels that the story could have ended another way.

A worthy phase of the story is the setting forth of the importance of rank and of tradition and ceremony in the British social system. The racketeer, who had gone to England intent on liquidating all his property and returning with the money, comes to understand *noblesse oblige*. And he comes as well to experience a certain pride in the ancestors who lived in the great castle before him, and who are venerated for the part they played in building the English nation—"big shots." The ceremony at which the fellow becomes officially bestowed with the title, is staged in a replete way, and is interest-

ing and impressive, as too is his eventual trial before the House of Lords.

Star's Performance Good

¶ Robert Montgomery goes to the pains of giving a distinct characterization as the racketeer, even to moving forward his hair line. It is good work. He gets a good deal of humor out of the fellow's impact with the English influences, and a bit of pathos too. Probably the crackling laugh could have been modified. Seems the authors would have done well not to have made the gangster quite so materialistic—"animalistic" is the word. He might have been a little less gross; he would have gained in humanness, and in audience sympathy and interest.

Edward Arnold gives a smooth performance as the gangster's personal attorney, though the part is not clearly motivated. Throughout the play we are led to believe, especially by his whimsical attitude, that the attorney, a cultivated man, is interested in seeing a change brought about in the gross fellow, while all the time he is plotting vengeance. Edmund Gwenn is excellent as a butler and confident, and Reginald Owen and E. E. Clive are others well cast.

Richard Thorpe's strongest work is the handling of Montgomery in the scenes preceding and during the trial, when the gangster is struck dumb by the turn of circumstances. There is much force here, and it is not the responsibility of the director if the scenes contrast markedly in tone with earlier ones. Cedric Gibbons and his associates have made handsome and expansive sets, which exude tradition. Photography also is well handled.

A story of originality and cleverness, though more could have been done with it. The atmosphere of the English countryside and of a great castle is most engaging. Students will be interested in the setting forth of the significance of rank and tradition in the British social system, as well as in the staging of an elaborate court ceremony.

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INVISIBLE STRIPES

Warner Bros.-First National

Executive producer	Hal B. Wallis
Associate producer	Louis F. Edelman
Screen play	Warren Duff
From a story by	Jonathan Finn
Based on book by	Warden Lewis E. Lawes
Director	Lloyd Bacon
Director of photography	Ernie Haller, ASC
Art director	Max Parker
Film editor	James Gibbon
Special effects	Byron Haskin, ASC
Music	H. Roemheld
Musical director	Leo F. Forbstein

Cast: George Raft, Jane Bryan, William Holden, Humphrey Bogart, Flora Robson, Paul Kelly, Lee Patrick, Henry O'Neill, Frankie Thomas, Moroni Olsen, Margot Stevenson, Marc Lawrence, Joseph Downing, Leo Gorcey, William Haade, Tully Marshall.

Reviewed by Bert Harlen

THE Brethren Warner here present us with another of their sociological-gangster dramas, which have become a forte of the organization. This one exposes the deplorably tough time convicts have, assertedly, once they have paid their debt to society and are back in society's lap. Society, we are told, is far from unanimously willing to consider the debt paid in full. There are other sociological problems touched upon, in especial the plight of a young mechanic, the convict's brother, whose salary of \$20 a week does not suffice for his getting married and contributing to the support of his mother, and who is thus tempted to take the wayward course.

Those who are not especially concerned with sociological problems *per se* will find the present study entails plenty of melodrama to divert them, including the usual group gun battle at the finale, with any number of corpses left strewn about.

His Trails Seem Overdrawn

¶ Source of the story material is a book by Warden Lewis Lawes, who certainly should be an authority on the vicissitudes of ex-cons, and if I were sure the plight of the fellow as here depicted is just as it is recounted in the warden's book, not a syllable of incredulity would leave my pen. It would seem, though, that Jonathan Finn has complicated the released convict's existence a bit in drafting his story.

Individual ex-cons may have encountered fellowmen as prevalently callous and belligerent as this man does, but his appears to be set forth as a representative case, and it does not strike us as representative. There is undoubtedly truth in the assertion that employers do not cooperate as fully as they should in rehabilitating the convict, yet it is generally known that a large per-

centage of them do not become reputable citizens. The percentage have risen to influ-

Some Good Performances

¶ The show is well played. Director Lloyd Bacon has brought to the screen with full force the melodramatic punch of the screen play. There is to be seen, too, a sequence of exceptional freshness and tenderness between the young mechanic and the girl he would marry, given a touch of poetry by Writer Warren Duff and directed with simplicity and sincerity. That the lad's eventual ownership of a garage is made possible through money stolen by his brother may leave sticklers for ethics not altogether satisfied at the conclusion. It is logical enough, though, homo sapiens being what he is.

George Raft and Humphrey Bogart are in good acting fettle. Jane Bryan is appealing, and it is evident that William Holden is no flash in the pan, here manifesting a good deal of promise. Flora Robson as the mother gives us some of those bright and shining moments which only occasionally illumine the screen. Ernie Haller's photography is excellent and H. Roemheld has worked an effective musical theme into his score, which has much of "big city" feeling. Leo Forbstein directed it.

Another Warner sociological-gangster drama, with both elements treated vigorously. The playing is good. A merit of the film is its emphasizing the fact that employers do not cooperate as they should in the rehabilitation of exconvicts, though the trials of the released prisoner in the picture seem overdrawn. Too grim and ballistic for the children.

McCarthy Funny, Story Inadequate

CHARLIE MCCARTHY, DETECTIVE, Universal

Producer-director	Frank Tuttle
Associate producer	Jerry Sackheim
Screen play:	Edward Eliscu, Harold Shumate, Richard Mack.

Original story Robertson White, Darrell Ware
Director of photography: George Robinson, ASC.

Art director	Jack Otterson
Film editor	Bernard Burton
Musical director	Charles Previn
Musical score	Frank Skinner

Cast: Robert Cummings, Constance Moore, John Sutton, Louis Calhern, Edgar Kennedy, Samuel S. Hinds, Harold Huber, Warren Hymer, Ray Turner.

Reviewed by Bert Harlen

GETS pretty silly. Of course, cooking up a starring vehicle for such irregular personalities as Charlie McCarthy and Mortimer Snerd must have been a task, yet it seems a more substantial

been contrived than this and abstruse details. There seems to be some variation of opinion between the five contributing authors as to just what should be done with the material, what attitude should be assumed toward the story. Asking the spectator to take a serious interest in a murder at one moment and then throwing plausibility to the four winds at another, is something like mixing ice and warm water.

Toward the end, plot apparently having run thin, there is a prolonged free-for-all fight, as slapstick as they come. Here again, we are expected to be concerned over certain characters escaping death at the hands of gangsters, while at times the brawl appears to be a travesty.

Dummy or Entity?

¶ Nor is it any too clear just how we are supposed to accept McCarthy, whether he is really just a dummy and the mouthpiece of Bergen, or whether he is an entity. Most of the time the former appears to be the case, though later on Charlie speaks when alone. Mortimer Snerd is on his own throughout. Charlie delivers himself in his usual tickling and captivating way, and a song number he does at the opening of the picture is fine fun. If his routine of gags is not quite as mirthful as it has been on some earlier appearances, he gets off a goodly number of bons mots. It is more the way Charlie says a thing than what he says that is funny, incidentally. One of his best responses comes from something like, "I like the rich. They are so kind to the poor," which does not sound like much in the telling.

Robert Cummings plays in his usual spirited way, but has little to work with. Constance Moore is competent, warbles pleasantly. John Sutton and Louis Calhern are efficient. Frank Tuttle produced and directed.

The story is pretty much shoddy, runs into considerable silliness. Charlie McCarthy may somewhat redeem the picture for you, though. As always, he provokes a good many chuckles. All right for the children.

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Musical Portions Unusually Good

SWANEE RIVER, Twentieth Century-Fox

Director Sidney Lanfield
Associate producer Kenneth Macgowan
Screen play John Taintor Foote, Philip Dunne
Director of photography . . . Bert Glennon, ASC
Dances staged by: Nicholas Castle, Geneva Sawyer.
Art director . . . Richard Day, Joseph C. Wright
Set decorations Thomas Little
Film editor Louis Loeffler
Costumes Royer
Sound W. D. Flick, Roger Heman
Musical director Louis Silvers
Cast: Don Ameche, Andrea Leeds, Al Jolson, Felix Bressart, Chick Chandler, Russell Hicks, George Reed, Hall Johnson Choir, Richard Clarke, Diane Fisher, Charles Halton, George Breakstone, Al Herman, Charles Trowbridge, George Meeker, Leona Roberts, Charles Tannen, Harry Hayden, Clara Blandick, Nella Walker, Esther Dale.

Reviewed by Bert Harlen

A MUSICAL based on the life of Stephen Foster, rather than a biography of the composer in a strict sense, is *Swanee River*. The story, viewed as an instrumentality for assembling a concert of Foster's songs, worked in with the salient facts of his life, is a rather ingenious job. The most rewarding parts of the picture, though, are the musical numbers. Done in Technicolor, on an elaborate scale, and given fine orchestral and vocal interpretation, at least for the most part, the numbers richly characterize spreading America of the past century.

Never has greater human feelings, pathos and exultation alike, been manifest in Foster's songs. That they so reach the heart tell us that the phase of our national life for which they spoke is by no means over; we are still in it.

Foster Is Not Realized

¶ In the story, however, despite several dramatic incidents, we do not get enough of Foster the man. This is not altogether an adverse criticism of the play. Indeed, the play is not altogether responsible for the final effect. The performances and, to some extent, the direction are contributing factors. As for the play, however, John Taintor Foote and Philip Dunne had a choice of writing an authentic, detailed biography of Foster or of using an account of his life merely as the basis for a musical production, and they chose the latter course. And not without good reason. It is generally known that Foster's life was not a happy or a savory one — and heaven knows the producers have elected to give us enough grim dram in these troublous times.

Seems to me, though, that somewhat of a better balance could have been

struck between realism and fancy, that there could have been a little more biographical penetration. Throughout most of this picture Foster lives a happy and successful, indeed gilded, existence. If not delving far into the inner processes of a man, it seems to me a biographical work should at least reflect the essential tone of a man's life.

Two "Toots" and She Leaves

¶ In one instance the soft-pedalling results in an unintended effect. There are only two occasions during his married life on which the composer resorts to heavy drink, both motivated by severe disappointments. That Andrea Leeds, his wife, leaves him after the second incident makes her appear rather smug and heartless. This impression is somewhat mitigated later on, when it is brought out that he has been an habitual heavy drinker, which should have been done earlier.

Attributing his death to a heart attack is permissible cinematic license, doubtless for the best. If memory serves aright, Foster took his own life. However, the authors have rather cleverly left an opening for personal interpretation in the episode.

Al Jolson Registers Strongly

¶ As for the performances, the accolade must go to Al Jolson, who finds one of the best parts he has had for a long time in E. P. Christy, a noted minstrel man of the day, and makes a good deal of it. His portrayal of the mannered minstrel star is often very amusing, but Jolson's chief contribution to the picture is his warm rendition of the Foster songs. Jolson is in black-face again during his numbers, working in the style that is his forte, that made him famous.

Don Ameche, seen as the composer, is capable in a technical way, brings a good deal of sincerity and emotional force to the part; and yet — for me, at least — he was not Foster. The work of those in other departments may have some bearing on this impression, still Ameche does not strike me as being well cast in the part. He is best in lighter, modern things. Andrea Leeds is not strong in her role. Her work needs more accentuation. Felix Bressart, Chick Chandler, George Reed, and Russell Hicks do well in prominent parts.

Striped Trousers Effective

¶ Sidney Lanfield has put a good flow into the action, and, on the whole, has pointed the emotional values of the story very effectively. The musical score and direction of Louis Silvers do much to build emotional effects, particularly, of course, in the musical numbers themselves. In these portions the Technicolor photography is a definite enhancement. Shots of the Hall Johnson Choir rendering *Old Black Joe* about the grave of Old Joe are striking. Natalie Kalmus,

Technicolor director, can certainly stick a feather in her hat for the minstrel scene in which a row of dancers, in trousers with red stripes, perform in unison — one of the most effective employments of color on the screen I have witnessed. Little has been done toward using color in a rhythmical way. Bert Glennon was in charge of photography. If some of the interiors of Richard Day and Joseph Wright seem a little too ornate for the mood of the piece, they have done especially interesting work in recreating an old theatre of that day together with the settings for the minstrel show on view.

As a musical production, the picture has uncommon emotional force. Though scarcely penetrating as biography nor presenting a very vivid portrait of Stephen Foster, the film captures much of the spirit of American life in the past century. Never have Foster's songs been presented more stirringly. Study groups should find especially interesting a scene in technicolor in which a row of minstrel dancers, with red stripes down their trousers, perform in unison, perhaps the first employment of rhythm with color outside of the cartoon field. The re-creation of a 19th Century theatre and the staging of a minstrel should be interesting to students of the drama.

La Henie Glamorous In New Comedy Role

EVERYTHING HAPPENS AT NIGHT
Twentieth Century-Fox

Director Irving Cummings
Associate producer Harry Joe Brown
Original screen play: Art Arthur, Robert Harari.
Director of photography: Edward Conjager, ASC.
Art directors Richard Day, Albert Hogsett
Film editor Walter Thompson
Skating numbers staged by Nicholas Castle
Musical director Cyril J. Mockridge
Cast: Sonja Henie, Ray Milland, Robert Cummings, Maurice Moscovitch, Leonid Kinskey, Alan Dinehart, Fritz Feld, Jody Gilbert, Victor Varconi, William Edmunds, George Davis, Paul Porcasi, Michael Visaroff, Eleanor Wesselhoft, Lester Matthews, Christian Rub, Ferdinand Munier, Holmes Herbert, Roger Imhof, Rolfe Sedan, Frank Reicher, John Bleifer.

Reviewed by Bert Harlen

SNOW and quaint Swiss dwellings and gay costumes again create their spell in *Everything Happens at Night*, the new Sonja Henie offering. The picture has a beguiling sparkle and spriteness. Not quite everything happens at night, though; fact is, the most important episodes transpire during sunlit hours. A stickler for accuracy, this Harlen person, especially with respect to titles.

The plot itself is nothing very novel, but, as Editor Beaton has pointed out,

any story can be made entertaining by the treatment of it. Around the situation of two reporters out for the same story, as well as for the same girl, some amusing by-situations have been spun, and the whole is studded with tricky dialogue. It is all escapist drama of the first water, but it achieves its objectives quite successfully.

Skating Number Outstanding

¶ A highlight of the picture is the feature skating number of Sonja Henie, which, it seems to me, is the loveliest number she has ever done. A stately Viennese-type palace is the setting, from the vast frozen floor of which rises a row of great pillars. In and out of these she skates. Much of the music is from Strauss, though some rumba music and other strains are interpolated. The skater has never been more scintillating, more flexible of facial play, than here. Seems she presents a few new maneuvers in her routine, too.

The Hollywood crafts of make-up, lighting and costuming have certainly worked their wonders in the case of La Henie. In some scenes here she is rather ravishingly comely. The comedy scenes she carries off with considerable zest and variety. In the heavier portions she is satisfactory, if a little taxed.

Cast Is Strong

¶ Robert Cummings' buoyant comedy performance, as one of the reporters, gained him high favor with the audience. He is certainly showing Hollywood what he can do these days. The droll essayal of Ray Milland, the competing journalist, also contributes importantly to the success of the picture. There is a strong and lengthy supporting cast, notable among whom are Maurice Moscovitch, Alan Dinehart, Fritz Feld, in another of his diverse characterizations, and Victor Varconi. Leonid Kinskey is subtle, but for the life of me I cannot seem to recall what he was in the story for.

Indeed, there is more than one facet of the yarn it would be just as well not to examine too closely. For one thing, Cummings' sending out the story to the world that the girl's father, a Nobel prize winner, believed to have been assassinated but really in seclusion in the mountains, is still alive, and then with much alarm doing everything to help the man escape from his enemies, apparently the Nazis. It appears that the old man's predicament would have occurred to him beforehand. On its face, though, the situation seems to present no unsurmountable dramaturgic difficulties, and I am surprised Art Arthur and Robert Harari did not manage it better. Moreover, Milland's out-and-out theft of Cummings' scoop puts him pretty much in the light of a skunk.

Men's Costumes Dazzle

¶ Most of the picture, though, as I said,

is in a light and some prison some points the humor. skating numbers, were staged by Nicholas Castle. The portions are in good balance with the story, an arrangement which might well be followed in succeeding films—one feature number and a shorter informal exhibition. Photography by Edward Conjager warrants mention, and certainly does the costuming by Royer. You should see what gentlemen are wearing in the Alps this season—flowing silk affairs that look like pajamas, and bushy feathers in their hats and everything. These journalists certainly take along a wardrobe.

It has gay atmosphere, some diverting humor, and the incomparable skating of Sonja Henie, seen here in perhaps her loveliest number. Very much escapist drama, but beguilingly so. Aside from the "poetry in motion," good for the souls of everybody, there is nothing especially in the picture to call to the attention of study groups, except to observe the wonders Hollywood crafts of make-up, lighting and costuming have worked with the skating star, who is super-glamorous in numerous scenes.

Gulliver's Travels Satiric In Theme

GULLIVER'S TRAVELS, Paramount

Producer Max Fleischer
Director Dave Fleischer
Screen play: Dan Gordon, Cal Howard, Ted Pierce, Izzy Sparber, Edmond Seward.
Adaptation of Jonathan Swift's tale: Edmond Seward.
Scenics: Erich Schenk, Robert Little, Louis Jambor, Shane Miller.
Directors of animation: Seymour Kneitel, Willard Bowsky, Tom Palmer, Grim Natwick, William Henning, Roland Crandall, Tom Johnson, Robert Leffingwell, Frank Kelling, Winfield Hoskins, Orestes Calpini.

Reviewed by Bert Harlen

THERE is much diverting fancy in the new feature length color cartoon *Gulliver's Travels*, produced by Max Fleischer. There are beautifully colored vistas, many droll little characters, a dream-world pair of lovers, and by gum, some philosophy too. The giant Gulliver sees the foibles of these little people, their hot-headedness, irrationality, and suspicion much in the same light that an omnipotent mind would see the vain wranglings of peoples of our earth today.

It will be recalled that Swift's tale was written with satiric intent, though, ironically, the work is now more widely read by children. In the film two rulers of the little folk lead their respective peoples into war because it cannot be agreed which song will be sung

yarn ling when a son
this two houses.

Comparison

¶ Making the second feature length cartoon, however, comparisons between it and Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* inevitably will be made. The present picture, though entertaining, does not approach the earlier one in artistic merit. The Disney genius—and here is one person in Hollywood to whom the much abused term can legitimately be applied—is plainly lacking.

For one thing the animation does not have the finesse it had in *Snow White*. Movements, especially the broader ones, are sometimes so jerky and rapid as to be just the least bit annoying. If the production budget necessitated the use of fewer stills, it would seem that it would have been better to use less of the broad gestures. The texture of the film much of the time is similar to that in the Fleischer short subjects, and somehow in a feature film we expect more.

Much Time Given to Byplay

More could have been done with the story. The Swift yarn does not appear to possess less potentialities than *Snow White*. The seven dwarfs, after all, were Disney's own creations. Characters in *Gulliver's Travels* are not as individual. Moreover, rather too much time is given over to byplay. The tying up of Gulliver and transporting him to the city occupies too much time, suspends plot movement. Many of the gags are of the more obvious type—people turning purple in the face or disappearing into the distance like a lightning streak.

Nevertheless, the picture succeeds in putting across a valuable thesis—that all our woes could be obviated if we only used our heads instead of our impulses; and it has moments of striking visual loveliness and considerable tickling whimsy. One of the most impressive scenes in the film, "directed" by Dave Fleischer, is the slow funereal movement of the great prostrate Gulliver over the countryside, carted by the Lilliputians. Another good scene is Gulliver's nostalgic singing of his desire for his homeland, alone at the seaside, some rhythmic shots of the waves being worked into the sequence. The musical numbers are one of the best features of the production, and several of the songs should be on the hit list.

This second of the feature cartoons is diverting, it presents a good deal of whimsy, visual beauty, engaging music, and succeeds in putting across a timely and socially important theme. Do not approach it expecting it to measure up to Snow White, however.

★ Short subjects now being produced by the major studios frequently cost as high as \$45,000 to \$50,000.

Of Mice And Men Is Starkly Grim

OF MICE AND MEN, Hal Roach

Producer-director Lewis Milestone
Associate producer Frank Ross
Screen play Eugene Solow
Director of photography: Norbert Brodine, ASC.
Photographic effects Roy Seawright
Editor Bert Jordan
Art director Nicolai Remisoff
Interior decorator W. L. Stevens
Sound recorder William Randall
Musical score Aaron Copland
Conductor Irvin Talbot
Cast: Burgess Meredith, Betty Field, Lon Chaney, Jr., Charles Bickford, Roman Bohnen, Bob Steele, Noah Beery, Jr., Granville Bates, Oscar O'Shea, Leigh Whipper.

Reviewed by Bert Harlen

SEVERAL of my confreres fell to talking in the lobby after the preview, myself being one of the group, and it was generally agreed that *Of Mice and Men* would either be a box-office flop or a hit. No in between. It is as starkly grim as anything the screen has presented. One woman member of the group said she thought she had seen everything in nerve-depleting dramas in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, but that on the present occasion she was utterly spent.

From several aspects *Of Mice and Men* is an admirable presentation. It is searching, it is honest, its two main protagonists are as individual, alive, richly compounded as any figures to turn up in dramatic literature during recent years. Whether the film will please everyone or not, I think the screen is benefited by the production of the piece.

Its Production Inevitable

¶ Not that any bouquets for courage or farsightedness are due Producer Hal Roach. The book was widely read, the play a New York success—in fact, chosen as the best play of the year by the New York critics—and the story would have been brought to the screen irrespective of its subject matter. It is evident, moreover, that had the story been presented to any studio as an original, it would have got past the first reader.

John Steinbeck's tale of the strange attachment between two lonely ranch hands, one a little fellow with the brains, the other a great brute with a feeble mind, is by now pretty generally known. In his direction Lewis Milestone has given numerous impressive cinematic touches to the piece, and yet the film, screen-played by Eugene Solow, follows very closely the stage play of George S. Kaufman, even to the intact inclusion of a sequence in which an old man is persuaded to let his faithful dog be shot, his only friend, for it

too is old and smells, a scene with force but slightly too long for what it accomplishes with respect to the play as a whole.

Is Abysmally Depressing

¶ "The best laid schemes o' mice and men oft go astray," from Robert Burns, provides both the title and the theme of the play. The theme is given object illustration among the characters; George, the great brute Lennie, and the old man do not get the farm and independence they have dreamed of; Lennie does not get to feed the rabbits, only a bullet into his feeble brain; the pretty, capricious wife of the ranch owner's son does not go to Hollywood, but death strikes suddenly at her too. It is all as near to being tragedy, in the sense of the traditional dramatic genre, as anything you will have seen on the screen. It will leave you abysmally depressed, a bad taste in your mouth. Yet it will have given you a strange stimulation too.

I specified tragedy as a dramatic genre, because, according to the theorists, a dramatist is entitled to assume, in that form, as lugubrious an attitude toward life as he cares to, and the whole is supposed to have a "cathartic" effect on the spectator. The motion picture, however, is essentially a realistic medium, and the present picture undoubtedly will be scored in some quarters—especially by California chamber of commerce groups—for its violation of strict representation both with respect to life on a California ranch and with respect to life in general. Plainly Steinbeck is prone to look on the darker side of things, a propensity observable in his other works too.

Of George and Lennie

¶ Performances also seem to follow closely the interpretations given on the stage, a bit too much so on occasion. Burgess Meredith is excellent as George, the brain of the duo. His work is restrained, thoughtful. Lon Chaney, Jr., is a good type for Lennie, many of his scenes make telling photographic compositions, and at times his whole performance rises to peaks of power, especially in the scene where, urged by George, he turns against the ranch owner's son, who has been pelting him in the face, catches the fellow's hand in mid air and squeezes it till the bones crumble—a horrible business.

At other times, though, Chaney is too broad, and especially in scenes which called for simplicity. This detracts from the effectiveness of the film. As George says of Lennie, "He's dumb, but not crazy." Chaney part of the time makes him all but a maniac. The actor has a great deal to work with, and these portions of overstress may impress many, but the fact remains that, for the dis-

cerning, there is a difference between acting and acting up.

Salty Language Not Missed

¶ Betty Field, the young wife, characterizes vividly, though some of her scenes might have been modified slightly without loss of vividness. The same could be said for Roman Bohnen, though his performance as the old fellow is certainly touching. Charles Bickford, Bob Steele, and others of the cast do well.

One does not miss the salty language of the book and play. The cinema medium emphasizes other elements with compensating effect. It would have been more artistic treatment if the speech of Candy's about once visiting "a dance hall" had been altered entirely instead of being left with ambiguous sense. Director Milestone has handled the scene of the girl's murder remarkably well, better, in fact, than I had imagined it could be done on the screen, terrible but not repulsive. Only her feet are shown, raised from the ground during the incident. Then her body slumps.

Musical Score a Big Asset

¶ Another good directorial touch is having characters disappear behind a barn and emerge again on the other side, their conversation unbroken, though some greater care could have been given the relationship between the volume of the voices and their distance from the camera. The opening of the film, incidentally, sets some kind of a record with respect to preludes of action before a title and credits appear. An entire episode is enacted before the title comes.

Art direction by Nicolai Remisoff is of a high order, as is the photography of Norbert Brodine, with special effects by Roy Seawright. Still, I question the use of the sepia tone film, or at least such an intensity of the tone. Seems to me it gets in the way of illusion, making us now and then conscious of the mechanics by which the drama is being presented. Moreover, the play is sufficiently heavy of mood without it.

Aaron Copland has written a musical score that is an integral part of the drama and which, imaginatively conducted by Irvin Talbot, does much to build the dramatic effectiveness of many scenes. I encountered Dr. Ussher in the lobby afterwards, who seemed much pleased over this phase of the production and doubtless will write something about it.

Very substantial cinema, forceful of theme, vivid in characterization. Excellently, though not superbly, done. Study groups will find considerable to opine about in the treatment of the material, especially with respect to the heavy reliance on the stage production for the screen play and in the performances. Not objectionable for the chil-

dren on moral grounds, but there are happier subjects for young minds to contemplate.

Crooked-Nice Hero Seems Out-Of-Date

RAFFLES, United Artists

Producer Samuel Goldwyn
Director Sam Wood
Screen play by: John Van Druten, Sidney Howard.

Based upon "The Amateur Crackman," by E. W. Hornung.

Cinematographer Gregg Toland, ASC
Art director James Basevi
Musical director Victor Young
Film editor Sherman Todd

Cast: David Niven, Olivia DeHavilland, Dame May Whitty, Dudley Digges, Douglas Walton, Lionel Pape, E. E. Clive, Peter Godfrey, Margaret Seddon, Gilbert Emery, Hilda Plowright, Vesey O'Davoren, George Cathrey, Keith Hitchcock.

Reviewed by Bert Harlen

AS SMOOTHLY running, subtle, and suspenseful a piece of filmic detective machinery as you will have seen, but I, for one, could not get a great deal of theatric satisfaction out of it. With all the chaos, slaughter, and misery now rampant in the world as a result of disregard for law, I found it just a bit annoying to be asked again to take an interest in a crook who is really a nice fellow. This type of character, however successful in the past, seems out of joint with present audience psychology. This is my impression. If you are an individual for whom gentlemen crooks still hold a fascination, you certainly will be charmed by Mr. Raffles, who is played with the nth degree of finesse by David Niven.

However deftly screen-played by John Van Druten and Sidney Howard, the story is without the asset of originality. Whether E. W. Hornung's *The Amateur Crackman* has been done before on the screen I cannot recollect, but the incidents have a reminiscent ring and some of the byplay consists in clichés, to-wit, "Won't you be seated?" after the detective has already sat down.

He Has No Bid for Sympathy

¶ Considerable endeavor is made to humanize Raffles, bestowing him with a conscience, having him charitable to old ladies, having him resolve to sin no more upon learning of a fair one's care for him, but I was not convinced, nor, what is more, even inclined to accept the fellow. I was, as stated, a bit annoyed at being asked to accept his disregard for law as glamorous. I am not saying that all crook-heroes are washed up. But Raffles has no bid for our sympathy. He does not come from under-privileged stock; he is a gentleman with a good education and excellent contacts and perfectly able to earn an honest living.

Be that as it may, Sam Goldwyn has

given the picture an... The background... Wood's direction... a DeHavilland plays... expecting sweetheart of the over nice-fellow-crook, and Dame May Whitty and Dudley Digges perform skilfully, as do several fellow members of the cast.

A deftly done crook drama, but the hero-crook seems a little outmoded and a little irritating, what with the results of disregard for law tragically evident in the world today.

Powerful Picture With Poor Title

THOU SHALT NOT KILL, Republic Pictures
Associate producer Robert North
Director John H. Auer
Screen play Robert Presnell
Original story George Carleton Brown
Production manager Al Wilson
Photographer Jack Marta
Supervising editor Murray Seldeen
Film editor Ernest Nims
Art director John Victor Mackay
Musical director Cy Feuer
Cast: Charles Bickford, Owen Davis, Jr., Doris Day, Paul Guilfoyle, Granville Bates, Charles Waldron, Sheila Bromley, George Chandler, Charles Middleton, Emmett Vogan, Leona Roberts, Ethel May Halls, Edmund Elton, Elsie Prescott.

Reviewed by Robert Joseph

AN UNFORTUNATE title spoils an otherwise splendid picture turned out by Republic Pictures. Here is an effort that tackles a religious problem of the Confessional without getting mawkish and sentimental—the usual approach of most pictures with a religious theme. *Thou Shalt Not Kill* emerges as a powerful picture of small town life through the efforts of Charles Bickford as the kindly and understanding Reverend Chris, and Owen Davis, Jr. as the town rowdy who comes to a full realization of his position in the community. Paul Guilfoyle turns in an admirable performance as a real murderer whose conscience torments him. Sheila Bromley is a fine and capable actress who should go far. She made a very unsympathetic part real. Doris Day shows her lack of experience, but more action before the camera should make her a fine actress.

Good Direction

¶ Director John Auer did a creditable job on this picture, and turned in a moving film. He seems to have been hampered by some roughish cutting by Murray Seldeen, and his story does not flow as smoothly as it might have with additional paring here and there. This is no reflection of the director's work, but rather an indication of the cutter's haste in turning out his work. The dissolves and wipes might have been made to better advantage and overlong scenes might have been clipped at the propitious dramatic moment. Auer gave the editor the material; but he didn't see it.

In *Gulliver's Travels* and Its Makers

B7
BRUNO DAVID USSHER

Are We Deaf?

¶ Once more it proves difficult to do justice to a picture in which music is not only highly important, as in the feature-length *Gulliver's Travels* (produced by the Fleischer brothers for Paramount), but when Victor Young's music emphasized the mood so definitely by means of tone color. A review is rendered difficult because of that stupid custom of playing preview performances as if they took place in an asylum for the deaf. This happened for the second time within three days at the Westwood Village Theatre. Really it is high time the music-makers of Hollywood should do something about this crude way of trying to impress a preview audience. Are they afraid individually to protest? Perhaps they are only prudent. But they should and could do something collectively, I fancy, through the Academy. This unintelligent practice of playing by far the largest part of the film noisily repeatedly blurred the dialogue. I happened to attend several of the *Gulliver* orchestra recordings (conducted by Young), and what was then cleverly illustrative instrumentation, had been turned at length into monotonous, tinny, raucous clatter. It was disgusting.

Seven Songs

¶ Notwithstanding this abominably vulgar manner of presentation, *Gulliver's Travels* was cordially received with laughter and applause during and after the showing. The impression would have been stronger yet, if some of Victor Young's clever melodic and rhythmic juxtapositions could have been heard clearly. I did not get much of an impression from some of the songs, of which there are no less than seven. *It's a Hap-Hap Happy Day* was written by Sam Timberg, Al Neiburg and Winston Sharples. The following six tunes and lyrics are by Rainger and Robins: *Faithful, Forever, I Hear a Dream, We're All Together Now, All's Well, Bluebirds In the Moonlight and Faithful Forever*. The *Hap-Hap Happy Day* and *All's Well* are gusty and readily appealing tunes. Jessica Dragonette was heard when Princess Glory sings. She always sounds pleasing on the radio and no doubt does on this occasion, although her first song is spoiled by a queer tremolo. Lanny Ross lent his voice to Prince David and did well.

Music for Moods

¶ Drawing on my impressions gained at recordings as well as during this imitation of a boiler factory, I give high praise to Victor Young for writing music which intensifies the mood and which

not merely clicks with the action in *Gulliver's Travels*. That is an addition to music for cartoon not found often. I liked particularly his music of the waves, for the sunrise at the end of the scene when Gulliver has been transported to the palace. Very good, too, is the first alarm music as Gabby rouses the town of Lilliput after he has found the "giant." Amusing and ingenious is music when the Lilliputians tie up and hoist the sleeping Gulliver. (Much of this staccato hammering and bustling about became tedious owing to over-loud reproduction.) Really entertaining is the music for the spies and for Bombo's bird messenger.

Young has created a score of genuine, original humor, waxing at times delightfully satirical, employing then orchestral instruments with telling effect. There is also music of lyric charm and and it has, as well as the comic sequences have, a reality of expression not usually accompanying animated scores. Heretofore chief effort most times has been limited to "hitting action on the nose," i.e., split-second accuracy of timing the music. But the entire production of *Gulliver* has rhythm and phrasing, and of that I shall speak in a later issue. Messrs. Fleischer and Young have made a distinct contribution toward filmic cartoon art and cartoon music of full feature length.

Rulers of the Sea

¶ Far be it from me to take so experienced and successful a producer-director as Frank Lloyd to task, but I believe strongly that he has given his composer, the eminent Richard Hageman not enough scope for underscoring in *Rulers of the Sea*, toning down, and worse yet, eliminating music, where, I am sure, a composer of Hageman's dramatic sensibilities, would have put some, had he been allowed to do so. This, of course, goes back to my old conviction, that the composer should sit in on the story and script conferences.

To my thinking it is nothing wonderful to have the sound-effect department insert so-called realistic noises of pounding waves and swishing winds. Water and storm have a "soul," they symbolize something which the composer can voice while writing hurricane music more convincing to the ear than what I would like to call sound-montage, i.e., a bit of recorded realism.

I will go back for a moment to the statement that the screen is essentially a pictorial art. No one can deny that, and it follows then that the composer should be allowed to be the sound-pictorialist. What picture-strengthening music Hageman might have written if

music had taken the place of so much "realistic" engine noise in the boiler room scenes!

Too Restrained

¶ Right or wrong, Director Lloyd's Scotch folk in *Rulers of the Sea* are outwardly curbed of emotion, except for matters of temperament not limited to that finely stern race. That limits a composer, especially one as honest as Hageman. He relates his music as a good bookbinder adjusts the all-round calibre of a binding to the contents, not that music is an "outside" thing in relation to the screen.

Hageman has devised a lovely and at times strong score, circumstances permitting. He employs such themes as *Loch Lomond* and *My Love Is Like A Red, Red Rose*, giving his music the tang of Scotland, where the wind is perfumed with thyme and salt. Some important scenes, as the first farewell on the dock, are also left without music. On occasions one gains an impression of abrupt picture cutting and unprepared musical entries. The violin solo in the death scene is an obviously sentimental concession in a score which otherwise rings true thematically and is orchestrated despite evident subjugations. There is sweeping power, tenderness and humor.

A Chance Missed

¶ More than once the Lloyd film cries out for music and the kind of music, humanly embracing and penetrating, which has made Hageman one of the top-ranking song-writers of today. But I have the feeling from this and a previous film that Lloyd too often uses music as an auto manufacturer uses paint i.e., on the outside only. Hageman has provided "bonny" music, apart from actually using two or three folk songs as *Land of Leal, You Take the High Way*. His incidental sequences, too, have the highland tang. Broad and rolling as his sweeping seascapes are, he is quaintly droll of melody and orchestration in the humorous scenes.

The girl is well silhouetted musically in sharp, crisp outlines, and again with music of shyly withheld tenderness. There is a catchy whistling tune, but right beneath this down-kept music one senses suppressed dramatic music of power. The storm music is not skilful fuss and feathers: the swells and smash are real. Hageman's orchestration is distinctive for his thematic (theme carrying) instruments are not overshadowed by general effects of color and mood. His horns have something of the elementary force of the sea. There is force, too, in his throbbing, duly laboring heaving and pushing of ship's engines.

Youth and the Future of the World

(Some months ago the *Spectator* published a personal letter from a young miss who in her childhood dubbed me "Uncle Welford," who did not get over it as she grew to young womanhood, and who would get in bad with me if she did. I could do with even a few more neices as charming and talented as Dorothea Hagedorn, daughter of Herman Hagedorn, distinguished American poet and author, and my good friend. Dot writes me another letter, so brilliant, discerning and timely, I can not deny *Spectator* readers the pleasure of reading it. —W.B.)

DEAR Uncle Welford:

We are still talking about the great time we had at your palazzo the other evening. I hope you have recovered from the Hagedorn avalanche. Now that we have our own place in Pasadena you must come to see us very soon.

To carry on from where time so rudely interrupted us the other evening; it certainly does seem as though more and more people were getting concerned about the youth of this country. The papers are full of what the older generation thinks about us and wants for us (not to mention what we want for ourselves!) But then "youth" is a pretty vague term, come to think of it. Reminds me of a young cousin of mine who couldn't speak English very well and was trying to describe a fowl he had shot: "It's something like chicken, more like goose — goes quack, quack."

Most Important Thing

¶ Anyway, bird, beast or fowl, the important thing is certainly not what are we going to get, but what are we going to be. There is no doubt that it is up to us what we are going to be remembered for. If our grandchildren have to read about the theories of a vague oblong mass of demanding humanity in fifty years they will shut up shop. They will want to read of people who set their eyes on the impossible and did not die until they reached it. At least if they are anything like us, they will want that kind of ancestor. Don't you think?

If we are a lost generation, it will be our fault because with all our education we will not have learned how to think.

When Direction Is Needed

¶ Last summer I was over at MGM and they showed us a series of ten minute shorts of famous men. It was extraordinary how you grasped the life of a man and knew him at the end of ten minutes. It must have been because the script writer had caught the

theme of the man's life and all the details poured into the one service the man had given. It looks quite simple—life, doesn't it? And certain decisions quite obvious when you look at them from the end of life. But it is at this beginning that you need direction. And yet, I thought, who are going to be the ones to create the raw material to make the ten-minute shorts of the future? —and the lives of such men as Pasteur and Zola? We can not go along living off the deeds of dead men, no matter how great they were. We must be great ourselves.

Pretty Grim Business

¶ The world certainly has stood on its ear since I last wrote you. Many of my friends are fighting. It must be a pretty grim business being youth over there in Europe now. You can not chose your future anymore. They have been in some savage battles... It seems hard to imagine them — what they have become like. I have known them such a long time — we climbed mountains together in the summer and skied together in the winter, but after all they have seen, it seems as though they must have aged a hundred years. In war you lose your youth whether you die or not, I guess.

But the majority of my friends over there are still free to fight in the other battle — the battle for Peace. I have heard they constitute a pretty stable element in their countries; panic-proof and propaganda-proof. But more than that, they are working like beavers. They have found out through experience how labor and management can together build a new spirit in industry. They have found a new reason for homes to be united, and are uniting their own and others. They are binding their people together to fight the enemies within — the greed and selfishness that make for war. The whole idea is a couple of thousand of years old, but it is new to us and we have got a new world in which to work it.

Their Theme for Living

¶ These "youths" have found their theme for living and are going at it with the sureness as though they saw it all from the end. Whether they will be great or not remains to be seen. But already they have the gratitude of leaders in their nations. I wonder if you ever met Ole Dorph Jensen when he was over here this summer? He is a young sportsman from Denmark. He left here to go back to take part in the Scandinavian games when sportsmen from all the northern countries were going to take part. When he got there

he discovered that the war had caused the officials to call the whole thing off.

Ole determined they would have the games — not for the sport alone, but because it would be a means of helping unite the Nordic north to be reconcilers of the nations. For weeks, he fought practically single-handed. He travelled up and down Scandinavia, talked with heads of committees and inspired them to carry on. The games were played. At the start men from rival clubs spoke to the throngs. They said that if the north were truly to be "reconcilers of the nations" they would have to start at home and be reconciled themselves. Representatives from each country spoke, calling for the same qualities in national life as were demanded in sports. The press was moved and the event stirred the north.

One Boy's Good Work

¶ Another boy, a Swiss, who was here this summer, the husband of one of my best friends, was mobilized the day he was married. News has been coming over how he is transforming the spirit in his section of the frontier. The problem of monotony which led in the last war to demoralization, has become an opportunity for them to gain a new spirit of honesty and unselfishness in their lives — through this boy — and they are using their weeks and months of waiting as a chance to think for their country. When they are free they will have a program for their nation.

It does seem as though some people step quite easily into heroism. In war it is not the money we can make, but what we do for the other fellow that wins the Croix de Guerre. Maybe if we began living that way here before war forced it on us, we would change the world.

Have Time to Think

¶ I was talking to a man the other night who has just come from England. It was hard for him to get used to the thinking out here on the Coast. "You are like an island," he said. "You still have time to think sanely. You still have time to do the kind of thinking that can save yourselves and us, too."

Well, that certainly puts the baby in our laps. Everybody else is fighting for his skin. We have got to fight for their spirit and ours, I guess. Each generation has had to fight some kind of battle: the revolution, the wilderness, the laws of nature. Well, ours is the greatest battle of all — this battle for a lasting peace.

That is all for this time. See you soon. —Dot.

How Que Can Be Made an Asset

BY
THE EDITOR

THAT too much dialogue in pictures is poison for film box-offices, is one of the Spectator's firm convictions. But, like any other element in a screen production, if presented intelligently, dialogue can add greatly to its entertainment quality.

Rarely does the screen today attempt to please us with the high art possible for spoken literature to attain. We are surfeited with the censored imprecations of gangsters, the standardized utterances of screen shadows in love, the "dese," and "dems" and "doses" of people who talk that way, and in almost every instance you will find the story overloaded with such talk is one which would have made more impressive entertainment if it had been written for the camera instead of for the microphone. The trouble with the screen today is that it is thinking in terms of talk, but not in terms of what it says. The talk which is included as an integral element of a screen creation does not have to be standardized. Let us consider some pictures. One easy to recall is *My Man Godfrey*. What speech in it can you remember? I can remember none, and I saw it three times. It was so delightfully nonsensical, so downright crazy, its mood so admirably sustained by the brilliant direction of Gregory La Cava and the clever performances of Carole Lombard, William Powell and other members of the cast, what the characters said was merely an articulated part of an amusing scene. We remember the whole scene but cannot recall the lines which were a part of it. That is one legitimate use of audible dialogue in a screen production—its use more as sound effect than as something entertaining by virtue of the manner in which it is worded.

Beauty of the Language

¶ *Rembrandt*, an English picture produced and directed by Alexander Korda, talented European whose ability was not recognized when he was trying to gain a foothold in Hollywood production circles, provides an illuminating illustration of the legitimate use of dialogue for the sake of its literary beauty and as an element in characterizing a player. Charles Laughton, playing Rembrandt van Rijn, delivers a speech of two hundred and nine words, containing story value which he could have expressed in three: "I love Saskia." But such a brief statement would not have matched the mood of the scene or given full expression to the feelings stirring him. In a low tone, speaking more to himself than to the gay throng surrounding him, Rembrandt pays a beau-

tiful tribute to Saskia, his wife, crediting her with the combined virtues of all women: "A creature, half-child, half-woman, half-angel, half-lover, brushed against him, and of sudden he knew that when one woman gives herself to you, you possess all women—women of every age and race and kind—and, more than that, the moon, the stars, all miracles and legends are yours; the brown-skinned girls who inflame your senses with their play; the cool, yellow-haired women who entice and escape you; the gentle ones who serve you; the slender ones who torment you; the mothers who bore and suckled you—all women whom God created out of the teeming fullness of the earth are yours in the love of one woman. Throw a purple mantle lightly over her shoulders, and she becomes a Queen of Sheba, lay your tousled head blindly upon her breast, and she is a Delilah waiting to enthrall you. Take her garments from her, strip the last veil from her body, and she is a chaste Susanne covering her nakedness with fluttering hands. Gaze upon her as you would gaze upon a thousand strange women, but never call her yours—for her secrets are inexhaustible; you will never know them all. Call her by one name only; I call her Saskia." (The *Rembrandt* dialogue was written by Lojos Biro and Arthur Winteris.)

Why He Played the Tuba

¶ A sustained speech by Gary Cooper in *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* has definite story value, and its length is justified by the homespun philosophy written into it by Robert Riskin and the intelligent reading given it by Cooper. Defending himself in court when his sanity is questioned, one of the counts against him being his playing of the tuba under circumstances which his accusers claim point to his lack of mental balance, Mr. Deeds speaks: "About my playing the tuba—seems like a lot of fuss has been made about that. If a man's crazy just 'cause he plays the tuba, somebody better look into it, 'cause there are a lot of tuba players running around loose. Of course, I don't see any harm in it. I play mine whenever I want to concentrate.

"That may sound funny to some people, but most everybody does something silly when they're thing. For instance, the Judge here is an O-filler. . . . You fill in all the spaces in the O's with your pencil. I was watching you. That may make you look a little crazy, Your Honor, just sitting around filling in O's, but I don't see anything wrong. 'Cause that helps *you* think. Other people are doodlers. . . . That's a name we made up back home for people who make foolish designs on paper while

they're thinking. It's called doodling. Most everybody is a doodler. Did you ever see a scratch pad in a telephone booth? People draw the most idiotic pictures when they're thinking. Dr. Fraser here would probably think up a long name for it, 'cause he doodles all the time. If Dr. Fraser has to doodle to help him think, that's his business—everybody does something different. Some people are . . . ear-pullers, some are nail-biters. That man there—Mr. Semple—is a nose-twitcher. The lady with him is a knuckle-cracker. So you see, Your Honor, everybody does funny things to help them think. Well, I play the tuba."

Won the Academy Award

¶ Not often even in a stage play composed entirely of speeches, and still more rarely in a talking picture, is one unbroken speech of such length written for a player. Subjecting audiences to the necessity of sustained listening for such a long period is not good craftsmanship. Both on the stage and in pictures the device usually resorted to to elicit essential facts of a witness's testimony in the trial of a case, is a question-and-answer exchange between counsel and witness. Such device could have been employed in *Mr. Deeds*. It was available to both Riskin, writer of the screen play, and Frank Capra, director of the picture. For his masterly cinematic interpretation of the story of *Deeds*, its director, Frank Capra, received from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the award for the best direction of 1936. A big factor in his selection no doubt was the manner in which he handled the scene in which Cooper makes his long speech. Capra presents the speech with a relieving accompaniment of pertinent action.

When Cooper charges the judge with being a doodler, there is a burst of laughter by the audience, stimulated into increased volume an instant later by the reaction of the surprised judge. And so it goes throughout the entire speech. Even though it is not interrupted by another voice, it is not a speech which demands sustained listening by the audience. Laughter bubbles up along its entire course. In essence a man defending himself against an accusation of mental incompetency, presents a spectacle lacking in all suggestion of mirth-provoking elements. But here the audience is not laughing *at* Mr. Deeds; it is laughing *with* him as he neatly turns the tables on his accusers, who, as the audience is aware, are endeavoring to get control of his fortune.

Why the Devil Is a Sissy

¶ Another legitimate use of audible dia-

logue is demonstrated in *The Devil Is a Sissy*, directed by W. S. Van Dyke; the story by Rowland Brown and the screen play by John Lee Mahin and Richard Schayer. It really is a moral preachment aimed at boys, but so well presented it was received with satisfaction by adult audiences. Although the titles of the majority of pictures are catch-phrases bearing little relation to anything in the stories, in this case the title has significance. It is a provocative title. What does it mean? is a question one who views the picture would ask. No creation of any art should suggest a question it does not answer if it is to preserve the perfect unity, the completeness within itself, all creations must possess to be worthy examples of their arts. The title of *The Devil Is a Sissy* prompts a question and its dialogue answers it. The judge of the juvenile court, played with understanding and sympathy by Jonathan Hale, has an informal and friendly chat with three boys brought before him on charges of having stolen some toys. As part of the intimate scene, we hear the judge: "That's what makes a fellow tough—to be able to take it. You wouldn't want anybody to call you a little devil, would you? That's what they say about bad little sissies who act naughty when they can't have their own way. . . . By the way, the devil's a weak sister. You know that, don't you? Because he was an angel once . . . and an angel has to be tough to do his job, and the devil couldn't be tough enough so they threw him out—and he's been hiding down below ever since. You know, I think the devil is a sissy."

Talking Has Limited Market

¶ From this speech by the judge we learn the title is the text of the sermon the whole picture preaches. It is another legitimate use of dialogue and as it is presented in an easy, conversational manner, it is assimilated by the audience without intellectual effort. Laugh-ton's speech has emotional appeal and Cooper's appeals principally to that sense which provides us with the utmost relaxation—our sense of humor.

One cannot quarrel with the film industry for offering for sale pictures demanding purely intellectual digestion, which expound philosophical and psychological problems. There is a market for them, but it is an extremely limited one as compared with that for emotional entertainment. It so happens that the vast majority of stories the industry has filmed since the screen became articulate, would have provided more satisfactory entertainment and commanded a wider market if they had been entrusted to the camera instead of to the microphone for their interpretation.

This Hollywood

SCENES THAT AREN'T THERE

ADMINISTRATION offices of our picture plants would do well to exercise some regulation over the dissemination of publicity stills which picture scenes from productions not finally edited. I have seen in magazines views of several scenes from *Mister Smith Goes to Washington* which were nowhere to be seen in the picture as it was released. One reveals James Stewart, in leather jacket, receiving Politician Guy Kibbee in the young man's home, a boy's band forming the background. Incidentally, this episode of the young fellow's reaction to being informed of his appointment to the Senate, should have been left in. I felt the lack of it when seeing the film.

Another publicity still presents Stewart, attired in frock coat and wing collar, riding in an automobile with a charmer. Not a flattering impression of Hollywood production methods must the general public get when it is presented with evidence that whole scenes are planned and filmed, only to be left out. Some patrons may even feel they have been "gipped." At least they cannot be expected to view the evident deletions with the same charity as we of the film city, who know that the best structure for a picture cannot definitely be decided upon in advance of shooting. Which is not to say that in many cases of drastic cutting the expense of filming the unused scenes could not have been largely avoided by more careful planning during the writing stage.

* * *

Got the Wrong Idea

A GOOD story is going around growing out of the publicity campaign attending the *Gone With the Wind* premiere in Atlanta. Seems that one newspaper was so whole-heartedly behind the staging of the premiere that it ran a banner headline proclaiming "Gable Is Coming." An old negro was thrown into an utter frenzy. Having misread

BY
BERT HARLEN

the headline, he thought wa coming.

* * *

AN ACTRESS REBELS

JOAN BENNETT is certainly entitled to a peev against Hal Roach and the United Artist people for the advertising they put out for *The Housekeeper's Daughter*, which miss was characterized in lilting verse as one who does things she "hadn't oughter." The advertising matter struck a low in bad taste, and was misrepresentative too, a factor further to the detriment of both the player and the producer. Miss Bennett's essay-al was anything but torrid, and even sensation seekers do not like being disappointed. It is said the actress has written letters to 26,000 women's clubs asking that they boycott the film, and threatens a law suit unless the housekeeper's daughter's asserted attributes are amended.

* * *

ANOTHER CYCLE HERALDED

A RELIGIOUS cycle is apparently beginning in film production, launched, producers contend, because the world seeks spiritual guidance and reassurance in these troublous times. At least two productions are definitely set, *Queen of Queens*, to be made by DeMille, and *The Great Commandment*, to be remade by Twentieth Century-Fox with substantially the same staff that turned out the recent Cathedral production. There should have been religious cycles all along, for purely commercial reasons, if for no other. Thousands of churchgoers could have been won into more frequent attendance of film theatres if their interests were administered to.

The Bookplate

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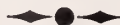
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¶ From all parts of the country come requests for our panels. Mrs. Francis J. Waindle, Motion Picture Chairman for the Illinois Federation of Women's Clubs, sends the following inspiring message, enclosed with a Christmas card: "Dear Mrs. Roberts: If grateful thoughts could build up a treasury of any value, you would indeed be wealthy. Your panels have done splendid service in the Chicago area. Your October and November panels have been displayed in fifteen clubs and two libraries. Thank you heartily. Cordially yours, Mary Waindle."

Japanese Boys' Town

¶ Comes from Japan a reaction to the film *Boys' Town*. Horie Nagasada heads a group of business men financing a city for boys near Tokyo fashioned after Father Flanagan's famous organization in Omaha. This Japanese school for boys' project is a direct outgrowth of the picture. Norman Taurog, who directed *Boys' Town*, has received a letter from Nagasada, asking for helpful information. Taurog has forwarded the letter to Father Flanagan.

This incident shows that moving pictures are finding their real mission in life, which is to inspire. Of course this must be done through entertainment, a fact that helps rather than hinders the inspiration to find its mark in the minds of audiences. Never was more hilarious comedy provided than in *You Can't Take It With You*, yet what we all took home with us was the lesson contained in the title.

Mice On the Set—Oh, No!

¶ For obvious reasons, a bird was substituted for the mouse in *Of Mice and Men*. When master-minds told Director Milestone he would also have to change the title, he solved the problem by prefacing the film with the Burns poem in which appears the line that suggested Steinbeck's title—"the best laid schemes o' mice and men gang aft a-gley."

Hands Across the Border

¶ *Northwest Mounted Police*, the de Mille production now in preparation, will deal with the so-called Riel Rebellion of 1885 and will introduce a Texas Ranger into the territory of the Mounted Police. Mr. de Mille says "the story sticks to history in both letter and spirit, the wishes of the Canadian government and the Mounted Police have been respected and the story also gives both sides of the Rebellion. One of the principal themes is the friendship and

cooperation between Canada and the United States.

Boat Modelers, Attention

¶ For their coming film, *The Sea Hawk*, Warners have built the largest craft ever fashioned in a film city. The Falcon, 135 feet long, with a 30 foot beam, four decks and a full fore and aft sailing rig, stands on its ways in the carpentry mills at Warner Bros. Studio, awaiting its formal launching. Another ship, a Spanish craft, will be built for the film.

Hands Across the Sea

¶ Bringing England to Hollywood for *The Earl of Chicago*, starring Robert Montgomery, required 1827 items for interior decoration and more than 3000 props. The film shows 33 English sets, including a mythical Gorley Castle and such historic settings as the House of Lords and the Tower of London. The Tower of London set was re-created, even to the headsman's block and the plaques showing the site of the execution of Anne Boleyn, Lady Jane Grey, the Earl of Essex and other notables. The House of Lords, pictured for the first time on the screen, required 369 props, each important to depicting the colorful ceremony, ritual and traditions of the famed governing body.

Poor Mickey!

¶ After learning the Continental telegraph code in connection with his role in *Young Tom Edison*, Mickey Rooney learned that this code came into existence with the use of wireless, so Mickey went to work to learn the Morse code.

Lesson Not "Gone With the Wind"

¶ Something to take home from this film is the realization that, through her many faults, the dominant characteristic of Scarlett stands out with striking beauty. The supreme trait was her never-failing ability to meet what came, carrying on with splendid courage and daring. *Meeting the Challenge of Life* and books of similar import are appropriate for display in connection with the filmed *Gone With the Wind*. The connection will not be missed by audiences and Scarlett's indomitable and instant reaction to calamity will prove an inspiration to others beset by minor tragedies; there could scarcely be greater trials than Scarlett endured and solved with colors flying.

Systematic Film Cooperation

¶ Libraries wishing to increase the reading of connecting books will do well to make film cooperation systematic and constructive. One of the essential points

is to keep posted on future films in order to have extra copies of their connecting books ready for circulation to coincide with the local appearance of the film. For this reason, the list of films, grouped under "Current," "Coming," and "In Production" to be found in this "Books and Films Department," will be found extremely useful. In addition managers of theatres in the neighborhood of the library should be contacted. Once their cooperation is secured, care should be taken to help the theatres in every way consistent with the Library's policy as a non-commercial organization. An important way of doing this is to post displays and distribute film bookmarks somewhat in advance of local showings. The time the manager needs your aid is just before and during the time the film in question is showing in his theatre; he will repay you by booking more films with which you can cooperate.

CURRENT FILMS

- Balalaika*—Play by Eric Maschwitz; Nelson Eddy, Ilona Massey, released 12-30. MGM
- Charlie McCarthy, Detective*—Edgar Bergen, Charlie McCarthy, Mortimer Snerd; released 12-23. Univ.
- Drums Along the Mohawk*—Novel by Walter Edmonds; Henry Fonda, Claudette Colbert. 20th-Fox
- Everything Happens At Night*—Sonja Henie, Ray Milland; released 12-22. 20th-Fox
- Gentleman from Arizona*—Cinecolor-filmed in Arizona; J. Farrell MacDonald, Joan Barclay, Craig Reynolds. Mono.
- Gone With the Wind*—Novel by Margaret Mitchell; Leslie Howard, Vivien Leigh, Clark Gable, Olivia de Havilland. MGM
- Great Victor Herbert*—Mary Martin, Alan Jones; released 12-29. Para.
- Green Hell*—Screen play by Frances Marion; Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Joan Bennett; released 1-27. Univ.
- Gulliver's Travels*—Story by Jonathan Swift; Max Fleischer feature cartoon; released 12-23. RKO
- Hunchback of Notre Dame*—Novel by Hugo; Charles Laughton, Maureen O'Hara, Walter Hampden, Sir Cecil Hardwicke, Edmond O'Brien, Minna Gombell; released 12-30. RKO
- Judge Hardy and Son*—Hardy Family; released 12-23. MGM
- Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*—Continues adventures of *Mr. Deeds*; Jean Arthur, James Stewart, Claude Rains, Guy Kibbee, Eugene Pallette; released 10-21. Col.
- Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex*—based on play *Elizabeth, the Queen*, by Maxwell Anderson; released 11-11. Warner
- Swanee River*—Life of Stephen Foster and life of E. P. Christy, minstrel man; technicolor; Don Ameche, Al Jolson, Andrea Leeds; released 1-5. 20th-Fox
- We Are Not Alone*—Novel by Hilton; released 11-25. Warner

COMING FILMS

- Abe Lincoln in Illinois*—Play by Robert Sherwood; Raymond Massey, Gene Lockhart. RKO

Adventures In Diamonds—Locale, Kimberley Mines; George Brent, Isa Miranda, Nigel Bruce; released 2-11. Para.
At Good Old Siwash—Novel by George Fitch. Para.
Brother Rat and the Baby—Story by Monk and Finklehoffe; Eddie Albert, Jane Bryan, Priscilla Lane; released 1-13. Warner
Years Without Days—Formerly *City of Lost Men*, and *20,000 Years In Sing Sing*; story by Warden Lawes; John Garfield. Warner
Earl of Chicago—Story by Brock Williams; Robert Montgomery. MGM
Fighting 69th—Story by Father Francis Duffy; Pat O'Brien, Jane Bryan; released 1-27. Warner
Grapes of Wrath—Novel by John Steinbeck; Henry Fonda, Jane Darwell, Doris Bondon, Zeffie Tilbury, Charlie Grapewin; released 2-2. 20th-Fox
His Girl Friday—Adapted from play, *The Front Page*, by Hecht and MacArthur; Cary Grant, Rosalind Russell, Gene Lockhart; released 1-20. Col.
I Married Adventure—Filmed in Africa; Mrs. Osa Martin; released 1-27. Col.
Invisible Stripes—Based on story by Warden Lawes; handicaps confronting released prisoners; George Raft, William Holden, Humphrey Bogart, Jane Bryan. Warner
Life of Dr. Ehrlich—Edward G. Robinson. Warner
Light That Failed—Novel by Kipling; Ronald Colman, Muriel Angelus, Ida Lupino; released 2-3-40. 20th-Fox
Little Old New York—Alice Faye, Richard Greene; released 4-5. 20th-Fox
Married and In Love—Based on *Distant Fields*; play by S. K. Laurens; Ginger Rogers, Alan Marshall; released 1-20. RKO
Northwest Passage—Novel by Kenneth Roberts; Spencer Tracy, Wallace Beery, Robert Taylor. MGM
Of Mice and Men—Play by John Steinbeck. U.A.
1,000,000 B. C.—Released February. U.A.
Parole Fixer—Formerly *Federal Offense*; based on articles by J. Edgar Hoover; released 2-2. Para.
Pinocchio—Juvenile by C. Collodi; feature cartoon; Walt Disney. RKO
Rebecca—Novel by Daphne Du Maurier; released 1-20. U.A.
Remember the Night—Novel by Rebecca West; Barbara Stanwyck, Fred MacMurray; released 1-19. Para.
Safari—Madeleine Carroll, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.; released 6-14.

Seventeen—Novel by Tarkington; Jackie Cooper, Betty Field, Otto Kruger; released 3-1. Para.
Shop Around the Corner—Margaret Sullivan, Frank Morgan, James Stewart; released 1-20. MGM
Sidewalks of London—Formerly *London After Dark*, and *St. Martin's Lane*; made in England; Charles Laughton, Vivien Leigh. Para.
Swiss Family Robinson—Book by Wyss; Tim Holt, Terry Kilburn, Freddie Bartholomew, Edna Best; released 1-20. RKO
Thou Shalt Not Kill—Charles Bickford, Owen Davis, Jr., Doris Day. Repub.
Vigil In the Night—Novel by A. J. Cronin; Brian Aherne, Carole Lombard; released 2-16. RKO
Virginia City—Technicolor; Errol Flynn, Brenda Marshall, Frank McHugh. Warner
Young As You Feel—Sixteenth Jones family film; released 2-9. 20th-Fox
Young Tom Edison—Mickey Rooney, Virginia Weidler, Victor Killian. MGM

IN PRODUCTION

And It All Came True—Story by Louis Bromfield; George Raft, Ann Sheridan, Humphrey Bogart, Jeffrey Lynn. Warner
Arizona—Novel by C. B. Kelland; technicolor. Col.
Arouse and Beware—Novel by MacKinlay Kantor; Wallace Beery, Dolores del Rio, John Howard, H. B. Warner. MGM
Bill of Divorcement—Play by Clemence Dane; Maureen O'Hara, Adolphe Menjou, Fay Bainter. RKO
The Bluebird—Play by Maurice Maeterlinck; technicolor; Shirley Temple; released 3-1. 20th-Fox
Chasing Trouble—Frankie Darro, Marjorie Reynolds. Mono.
Dark Command—Novel by W. R. Burnett; Walter Pidgeon, Claire Trevor, John Wayne. Repub.
Daughters of Today—Rochelle Hudson, Glenn Ford. Col.
Five Little Peppers Midway—Second in series; Edith Fellows. Col.
Florian—Novel by Felix Salten; Robert Young. MGM
Forty Little Mothers—Novel by Edward Fadiman, Eddie Canton, Rita Johnson, Bonita Granville. MGM
Front Page Lady—Novel by Charles Williams; espionage in United States; Gertrude Michael, Warren Hull. Mono
Irene—Musical comedy hit; screen play by Alice Duer Miller; Anna Neagle, Ray Milland; released 4-5. RKO

Little Bessie—A. J. Kane. PKO
Man Who Was—A. J. Kane. Fox
worthy Hal—A. J. Kane. Fox
Mae Marsh—Llo. No. Fox
My Son, My Son—No. U.A.
Spring; Brian Aherne, I. ward. U.A.
Music In My Heart—Formerly, support. U.A.
to Happiness; Rita Hayworth, Kostelanetz Orchestra, Edith Fellows, Alan Mowbray. Col.
My Favorite Wife—Cary Grant, Irene Dunne. RKO
Primrose Path—Based on novel, *February Hill*, by Victoria Lincoln; Ginger Rogers, Joel McCrea. RKO
Strange Cargoes—Formerly *Not Too Narrow, Not Too Deep*—Story by Richard Sale; Melvyn Douglas, Joan Crawford. MGM
Three Cheers for the Irish—Priscilla and Rosemary Lane, Dennis Morgan, Thomas Mitchell. Warner
Too Many Husbands—Play by Somerset Maugham; Melvyn Douglas, Jean Austin. Col.
Way of All Flesh—Novel by Samuel Butler; Fritz Leiber, Muriel Angeles, Bertron Churchill. Para.
We Shall Meet Again—George Brent, Merle Oberon, Gene Lockhart. Warner
Westerner—Gary Cooper. U.A.

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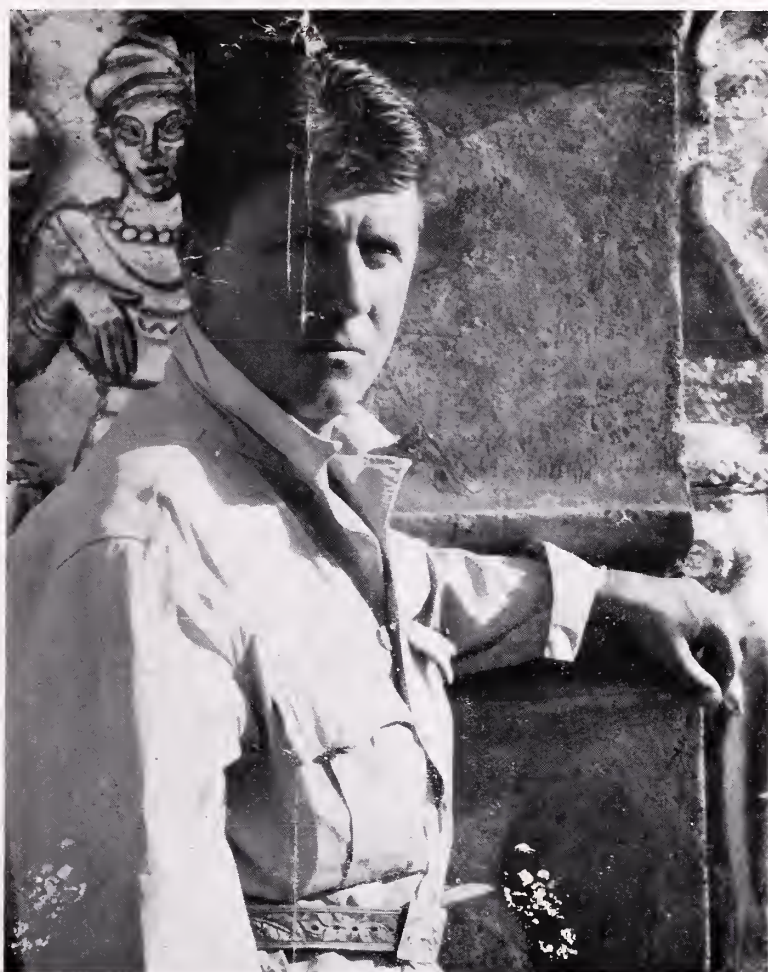
Twice Monthly

Edited by WELFORD BEATON

Fourteenth Year

Los Angeles, California—March 1, 1940

Vol. 14—No. 22



GEORGE STEVENS

Producer-Director, Who, in His "Vigil In the Night," Reinstates
the Camera in Its Place as the Screen's Story-Teller

Medium
See Editor's Easy Chair

REVIEWED:

(Page 5)

Northwest Passage



Young Tom Edison



My Little Chickadee

The Man From Dakota



The Lone Wolf Strikes

Seventeen



Free, Blonde and 21



From the EDITOR'S EASY CHAIR

GEORGE STEVENS SHOWS THE WAY

A YOUNG producer-director on the RKO lot, George Stevens, has made available for study by the film industry a demonstration of what it must do to relieve the seriousness of its present financial condition and to recreate in the public the habit of attending motion picture theatres. Silent pictures first created the habit; talkies put an end to it. When the screen acquired a voice, the film industry abandoned everything which was responsible for its astonishing growth, went into an entirely new business, still thinks it is in the business which made it so prosperous, and belly-aches about the public's being so hard to please.

Ever since pictures went talkie the Spectator no doubt has tired its readers by the reiteration of its plea for the use of the microphone as an aid to the camera, not a substitute for it, as the screen's storytelling medium. In as many ways as words could express it, the Spectator warned the industry of what would be the consequences of its substitution of aural entertainment for visual entertainment—of its appeal to the intellect instead of to the emotions of its patrons—but such warnings were unheeded and Hollywood has talked itself into money troubles, scores of anti-trust suits and other difficulties, all the direct result of the public's refusal to patronize everything offered it, as it had the habit of doing when pictures were silent.

What Has Gone Before

¶ In the last Spectator I reviewed "Vigil in the Night," an RKO picture produced and directed by George Stevens. I characterized it as, "The perfect talkie formula... the farthest advance towards perfection yet made by any studio." I was unacquainted with Stevens, never to my knowledge had seen him, but the picture interested me tremendously in the man who made it, the man who realized on film everything the Spectator had advanced as a theory. I thumbed back through Spectators to discover if I had reviewed any other Stevens pictures. I found that of his "Alice Adams" (1936) I had written: "Stevens is a newcomer of much promise, a director who realizes the importance of the camera." Quotes from two reviews in 1937: "What all my arguments have aimed at is exemplified in Steven's direction of this picture."... "His direction has the merit of being so easy and smooth it draws no attention to itself, reveals no striving to achieve results, no stressing of points." His "Gunga Din" (1939) I characterized as "one of the

most distinguished feats of screen craftsmanship Hollywood has to its credit."

One Prediction Comes True

¶ After getting my nose out of Spectator files, I resolved the next thing I had to do was to meet Stevens. I went to the RKO lot and was jerked into the office of an executive who roasted me for roasting his last picture. When he cooled off, we talked about Stevens. "One thing which makes George so valuable to RKO," the executive told me, "is his popularity with the big stars. All of them seemingly want to work for him, and we have no difficulty in borrowing one when he or she is told the picture is to be directed by George Stevens." That had a familiar ring, stirred something in my memory, and when I got back to my library and into the files again, I found this in the Spectator of May 7, 1938: "After all Hollywood sees 'Vivacious Lady,' Stevens will be among the directors for whom players will be anxious to work."

But before leaving the lot, I called on Stevens in his office. He proved younger than I expected him to be. By sampling a pipeful of it, I discovered he has a nice taste in smoking tobacco, and a putter leaning languidly in a corner inspired some remark about golf, and for a half hour or so we exchanged experiences each of us had had on various courses. I supposed he lied, too, but perhaps not; he looks like an honest, straight-forward young fellow, and I would not be surprised if he really did get that hole in one. Anyway, we did not talk about pictures for the quite sufficient reason that he would not talk about them. So I left him, went to a projection room and, all by myself, viewed "Vigil In the Night" again. I was afraid it could not be as good as I thought it was when I first viewed it, and I wanted to make sure.

Of Great Value As Lesson

¶ The second viewing deepened my assurance that the Stevens picture could be, to the film industry as a whole, the most valuable production ever to come from a Hollywood studio. It is a filmed text-book on the relative places of the camera and the microphone in the construction of a piece of screen entertainment. But will Hollywood accept it as such? By no means. Hollywood producers believe their salary checks, really believe they have the brains to justify the size of the figures on the checks, think only in terms of their self-estimated importance, and would be shocked if told they could learn anything more about pictures than they know already. They are the persons

responsible for all the woes the film industry is suffering.

But a new order in pictures is being ushered in by the pressure being applied from the outside. We always will have pictures. Among prop men, cutters, assistant directors, young directors, writers there are the makers of the pictures of the near tomorrow, and each of them should study every scene in "Vigil In the Night," should see it first as entertainment, then several times as a study in technique.

Camera Tells the Story

¶ The outstanding feature of the technique is the manner in which the camera is used to tell almost the entire story. In the opening sequence the atmosphere and mood of the production are established without the sound of a voice being heard; several other sequences are wordless, two of them being the most dramatic in the highly dramatic picture. But even in dialogue scenes spoken lines depend greatly upon the camera to give full expression to their meaning. The approach to a scene, its composition and the facial expression of those who speak in it, are what give full story significance to what is said. All lines are spoken quietly and get their emphasis from what we see, not from what we hear.

The camera, too, develops characterizations. In one shot we see two sisters conversing; one dressed plainly, carelessly, even her smile suggesting seriousness; the other neat, hair dressed meticulously, her seriousness suggesting a frivolous background. The camera tells us all that, and it is what gives meaning to what the girls say to one another. Truly Stevens wields an eloquent camera.

And It Is Good Box-Office

¶ But, after all, the thing which counts is not the technique employed; it is the public's response to the picture as a whole. Picture making is a business, and has George Stevens made one that will attract money to the box-office? He has. I had a lump in my throat and tears in my eyes when I saw it first with a big audience. The lump came back and the tears returned when I sat alone and saw it the second time. Nothing Stevens has done with his story means a thing at the box-office unless the sum total of his effort evokes emotional response from those who view it. I am confident "Vigil In the Night" will get such response from all who view it.

But whatever its financial fate, it comes as a boon to the motion picture industry if the industry proves itself intelligent enough to recognize that George Stevens has the cure for the financial ills it now is suffering. Only more camera and less microphone will revive picture-going as a public habit. I have urged that a hundred times. On the screen, how to do it is demonstrated by Stevens in a hundred minutes.

* * *

WE VISIT CRADLE OF TALENT

¶ TOOK advantage of a previewless evening to visit one of the cradles of acting genius, the Bliss-Hayden School of the Theatre, which was presenting a

play with a cast composed of some of its pupils. When the film industry develops an adult mentality we will have schools in Hollywood which will teach screen acting, but at present we must be content with looking for screen talent in the ranks of those who are being taught the alien art of stage acting, which, at least, gives them an opportunity to develop the personalities which make them valuable to pictures. Three of the people in the cast of "Good-Bye, My Love," the play I saw, should engage the attention of screen talent scouts. Mariam Jay, who played the leading part, has beauty, brains and personality to recommend her as candidate for picture honors. The part she played gave her an opportunity to display a wide range of emotional acting. Mary Jane Karns, Roscoe's eighteen-year-old daughter, is another whom some studio should grab. Good to look at, with a rare grasp of comedy values and ability to express them, Mary Jane is going places. The third player who attracted my attention is Rian Randal. He, too, is going places. If you forget the name, I will remind you of it in a couple of years when I boast of having predicted for him the success he then will have achieved.

* * *

WARNERS MAKE WISE CHOICE

¶ PUTTING Virginia Bruce under a long term contract is a wise move on the part of Warner Brothers. Possessed of charming personality, beauty of face and form, real acting ability, Virginia needs only the right roles in the right pictures to put her away up on the list of box-office ratings. There is something wrong with a system which makes it possible for a studio practically to put an end to a player's career by signing her to an exclusive contract and then keep her off the screen. I hope Virginia's Warner contract stipulates that she is to grace the screen with her presence at least twice a year.

* * *

NEW YORK CRITICS NOT CONFUSED

¶ COMMENTING on the New York film critics' selections of the best performances for last year, a woman of Gotham is quoted as follows in Louella Parson's column: "Jimmy Stewart does not deserve the award, fine as he was in 'Mr. Smith Goes to Washington,' because he played a role that was tailor-made. Jimmy is an acting stylist. Ditto Jean Arthur. Ditto Bette Davis. Contrast these players, who play themselves in every role, with a characterization such as Robert Donat turned in with 'Good-bye Mr. Chips,' Paul Muni is another great actor who characterizes. I am afraid the New York critics have confused great personalities with great artists."

I think it is the writer of the letter who is confused, not the critics. The screen derives its strength as popular entertainment from its "tailor-made" roles. It is not an acting art; it demands of a player that he absorb his role until he becomes the person he is playing. Great personalities, not great artists, are exactly what give the screen its great appeal. Jimmy

Stewart deserved the critics' award because he is a great personality, because he can express his personality in terms of the medium in which he works. The only thing which surprises me in regard to the critics' award is the belated recognition, by at least one New York element, of the status of the screen as an individual art, not merely a mechanical process by which stage technique is brought to the screens of the world.

* * *

JIMMIE'S FOOD AND PHOTOGRAPHY

TO MAKE a success of his Chinese restaurant on Ventura Boulevard, all James Wong Howe need do is to achieve, in the food he serves, the artistic perfection which characterizes his screen photography. When you see Jimmie's name on the screen you know you are in for a visual treat even if the picture has not much of anything else to offer.

* * *

EDITOR HAS A DINNER DATE

AT A dinner in honor of Lloyd Douglas, whose "Magnificent Obsession," published ten years ago, is followed now by what is practically a sequel, "Dr. Hudson's Secret Journal," I had the good fortune to sit beside Rachel Field, whose latest novel, "All This and Heaven Too," is on the list of best sellers. Miss Field told us an amusing story. At various times she has wanted copies of some of her old books which were out of print, and each time went to a New York book store which made a business of keeping such books in stock. Feeling embarrassed at asking for books she herself had written, she gave a fictitious name when making a purchase. On the occasion of her sixth visit to the store the proprietor asked her why she was buying so many of one author's out-of-print books. "Well," she replied, "Rachel Field is a relative of mine." "Oh, I see," replied the book seller, "charity begins at home." . . . I had interesting chats with Carrie Jacobs Bond and May Robson, both white-haired veterans still as vigorous as girls in their teens; also met Elizabeth Page, the charming writer of "The Tree of Liberty," currently successful book which will be made into a picture by Producer-Director Frank Lloyd, with Joan Fontaine and Cary Grant as stars. And present at the dinner also was my very good friend of a dozen or more years, Louise Dresser, great actress, grand woman.

* * *

CONTRARY TO HUMAN IMPULSES

DEFENDING in print double-feature programs, a writer claims they give the public a chance to see at least one picture it likes, and it does not have to remain to see the other. Weak reasoning. When a man pays for two of anything, he wants both, does not want to keep one and throw the other away.

* * *

PUBLICITY BOYS PLEASE NOTE

WILL studio publicity departments do me a favor? When I see a picture in which a side-wheeler is shown paddling up a tributary of the Amazon, I like

to imagine I am looking at just that; but invariably after a preview I find some publicity material explaining in detail the difficulties studio technicians overcame in staging the scene on the back lot, and how they had to train houseflies to act like Amazonian mosquitoes. The favor I ask is to be permitted to imagine I am looking at the real thing.

* * *

MENTAL MEANDERINGS

UP NEAR the paved highway where our dirt road comes to an abrupt end, a newcomer has built an imposing residence, and on the top of each of two arrogant pillars at the street end of the driveway has placed a light, the two being the only illumination the dirt road boasts. One Sunday morning the newcomer came briskly down the road, got a little group of us together, from one pocket pulled a petition, from another a fountain pen, told us where to sign, and that, with his influence at the City Hall, our dirt road soon would be transformed into a smooth pavement. To the views we expressed about his pavement idea, we added the information that in our opinion his driveway lights already were more ostentation than we could stomach with complacency. The dogs and I were on the front lawn late last night when I was hailed from the road. It was the newcomer. "Just strolled down the road in the moonlight," he told me. "You know, I think you people along here know how to live. I'm going to jerk out those damned lights and substitute urns with ivy drooping from them. I'm even growing fond of the bumps in the road." In time the country gets you. . . . But at other places in the Valley, which is composed principally of square miles of open space, real estate developers are building houses so close together a man can borrow tooth powder from his neighbor without either of them having to leave his bathroom. . . . Think I'll have to do more of my writing at the office; things sometimes get a bit strained around the house. For instance, this is the day Wendy, the world's most charming granddaughter, spends with us. Tom, the man about the place, made a kite for her and commissioned me to find some string. I saw the loose end of something sticking out of a basket in which Mrs. Spectator keeps the knitting, crocheting, weaving jobs she is working on. I pulled it and it kept coming until I had a dandy big ball; Wendy, Tom and I flew the kite and had a wonderful time. While I was smoking my after-lunch-eon pipe I heard Mrs. Spectator at the phone; she was telling a friend that in some mysterious way a mat she was making out of twine and had nearly finished had disappeared from her work basket; couldn't find it anywhere; had looked everywhere but in the garage and was going to look there next, although she couldn't imagine its being there. So I hot-footed it to the garage, hid the kite, and now I don't know what to do about it. Or what she might do if she knew. We've been married only thirty-one years, and it takes longer than that to learn just what a woman would do under some circumstances.

What Late Ones Look Like

Stirring History in Metro Production

NORTHWEST PASSAGE, MGM

Producer Hunt Stromberg
Director King Vidor
Screen play: Laurence Stallings, Talbot Jennings.

Based on the novel by Kenneth Roberts
Musical score by Herbert Stothart
Recording director Douglas Shearer
Art director Cedric Gibbons
Associate art director Malcolm Brown
Directors of photography: Sidney Wagner, ASC:
William V. Skall, ASC.

Film editor Conrad A. Nervig

Cast: Spencer Tracy, Robert Young, Walter Brennan, Ruth Hussey, Nat Pendleton, Louis Hector, Robert Barrat, Lumsden Hare, Donald McBride, Isabel Jewell, Douglas Walton, Addison Richards, Hugh Sothorn, Regis Toomey, Montagu Love, Lester Matthews, Truman Bradley, Andrew Pena.

ANOTHER outstanding achievement to the credit of Producer Hunt Stromberg; a stirring, uplifting screen materialization of a page of United States history, turned nearly two centuries ago but alive today with inspiration to those who have difficulties to overcome. It is a picture which ignores screen conventions in the composition of its story. Two hundred pioneer soldiers set forth to wipe out a tribe of murderous Indians, month after month encounter and overcome obstacles which nature stacks against them, accomplish their objective, fifty come back. That is the story, but the screen records it in heroic terms, makes of it a gripping, inspiring drama of which Hollywood has reason to be proud. It is a literary, visual and technical triumph which gives the screen new dignity.

Laurence Stallings and Talbot Jennings put in screen play form that portion of Kenneth Roberts's book, *Northwest Passage*, which was used in the picture, and adroitly paved the way for a sequel by a line of dialogue in the closing sequence to the effect that the *Northwest Passage* itself still remained to be discovered. I am quite sure audience reaction to the picture will constitute an imperative demand for a sequel. If the picture does not prove an outstanding box-office success it will be because the public is harder to please than it should be.

Direction and Performances

King Vidor's direction is perfect. It was a tremendous emotional and physical job the well constructed screen play put into his hands, and right nobly did he execute it. And right nobly, too, did the cameras of Sidney Wagner and William V. Skall respond to the demands made upon them. Scores of scenic shots

are superb examples of composition and photography. Lakes, streams, forests, mountains, cloud effects form beautiful and awe-inspiring backgrounds for the heroic soldiers as they bravely carry on. Vidor's direction is notable particularly for the manner in which he keeps alive on the screen the indomitable spirit of the soldiers as they cheerfully meet and overcome the difficulties they encounter.

Spencer Tracy has a habit of making us believe no other actor could play any role in which he appears. He does it again here, makes his Major Rogers, the heroic leader of heroes, a real person, not an actor. And thanks to Vidor, we have a new Bob Young who reveals intelligence, emotional power and adaptable acting ability hinted at even in the wishy-washy roles to which he was assigned when he first came to the screen, but which until now he was not given an opportunity to display. Walter Brennan is another who distinguishes himself in *Northwest Passage*, as does Addison Richards in a highly emotional role. Regis Toomey, one of the finest young actors available to pictures and one of the most overlooked, does quite enough in this picture to point up the folly of producers in not making greater use of him.

Competent Craftsmanship

The acting pattern is sprinkled with well done bits, too many for individual mention. It is an almost wholly masculine picture, the only actress in it who is given an opportunity to display acting ability being Isabel Jewell, who appears briefly but makes her presence felt. Romantic element is slight; Ruth Hussey and Bob Young are in love when the picture opens, they are holding hands when it ends, and that is all the romance there is in this purely masculine piece of screen entertainment.

In all its technical aspects *Northwest Passage* reveals completely competent craftsmanship. It is a far cry from the *Romeo and Juliet* sets of Cedric Gibbons to his log fortifications and Indian teepees in this picture, but for atmospheric integrity they can be compared. Film editing is an important job in the production of such sweep and so much activity which at all times must register persistent forward movement. And a well done job did Conrad Nervig make of it. For the scenic beauty which is such a big feature of the picture we have technicolor to thank.

A picture to command the serious attention of all students of the screen, one which demonstrates the screen's advantage over all other media as a teacher of history, the only medium which can make it live again before our eyes. May appeal more to masculine than to fem-

inine tastes, but I have my doubts. Not for children or for young people whose tastes run to the frivolous. But exhibitors certainly can get behind it with enthusiasm.

Biographical Film Scores A Success

YOUNG TOM EDISON, MGM

Producer John W. Considine, Jr.
Associate producer Orville O. Dull
Director Norman Taurog
Original screen play: Bradbury Foote, Dore Schary, Hugo Butler.

Based on material by H. Alan Dunn
Musical score Edward Ward
Art director Cedric Gibbons
Associate art director Harry McAfee
Director of photography: Sidney Wagner, ASC
Film editor Elmo Veron
Cast: Mickey Rooney, Fay Bainter, George Bancroft, Virginia Weidler, Eugene Pallette, Victor Kilian, Bobbie Jordan, J. M. Kerrigan, Lloyd Corrigan, John Kellog, Clem Bevans, Eily Malyon, Harry Shannon.

BIOGRAPHICAL venture which should prove highly successful. Here we have the first half of it, the half that tells us about the boy. On the way is the second helping, the one which will tell us about the man, the Wizard of Menlo, Thomas A. Edison, who illuminated the world. Those who view the first picture will be impatient to view the second—an important box-office factor. Mickey Rooney's name will attract millions of patrons, among them a few million who are interested more in him than in the man the boy became, but after seeing him they will not be content until they see the man. As a ballyhoo for the second picture, the first will prove a huge success, further assured by the fact that Spencer Tracy will play the man.

The producer-writer combination which made such a human document of *Boys' Town*—John W. Considine, Jr., producer, and Dore Schary and Hugo Butler, writers—again functions as a unit to make *Young Tom Edison* a warmly human picture. The boy had much to contend with in his small home town, his series of experiments creating doubts as to his sanity. But we regard our young hero's woes with more complacency than we do those of the hero of a purely fictional creation; we know in advance that ultimately he will triumph and make the small town proud of him. Such knowledge, however, does not temper our sympathy for him or lessen our regret that he should be misunderstood so sadly. And therein lies the great appeal of *Young Tom Edison*.

No Mugging By Mickey

So far we have considered Mickey Rooney ideal casting for every part he

has played, and the same holds true here. Even its casual reading has made the adult population acquainted with the achievements of Edison, the man, but few of us have knowledge of the birth pains his genius suffered. In that regard *Young Tom Edison* is a revealing document, a poignant recital of trials and disappointments, illuminated with flashes of humor, bits of comedy, which sugarcoat its taking. Mickey does no mugging here, does no straining for effects, never suggests the actor. As his younger sister—really older in the Edison family—we have that superlatively clever little Virginia Weidler, a child who would be a great box-office star if only one among our many overstuffed-salaried producers had brains enough to realize it.

The parents of the Edison children are played by Fay Bainter and George Bancroft, and each gives a really fine performance. Others who distinguish themselves are Eugene Palette, Victor Kilian, J. M. Kerrigan, Lloyd Corrigan and Eily Malyon. Norman Taurog gave the picture understanding direction, and Sidney Wagner (photography) and Elmo Veron (film editing) ably acquitted themselves of their technical chores. Cedric Gibbons's recreation of the Port Huron, Michigan, of the young Tom Edison days, is a notable feature of the production.

Interesting to students as a further demonstration of the screen's strength as a medium for the presentation of biographical material, to make the past live again before our eyes. Enough youthful appeal to entertain the children and to create their interest in Edison, the Man, when the second picture is shown, the two thus becoming, from an educational standpoint, the greatest biographical lesson the screen has made available. Exhibitors should find it profitable booking.

Fields-West Film Rather A Poor One

MY LITTLE CHICKADEE, Universal Pictures
 Director Edward F. Cline
 Producer Lester Cowan
 Original screen play Mae West, W. C. Fields
 Director of photography Joseph Valentine, ASC
 Art director Jack Otterson
 Associate art director Martin Obzina
 Film editor Edward Curtiss
 Musical director Charles Previn
 Musical score Frank Skinner
 Cast: Mae West, W. C. Fields, Joseph Calleia, Dick Foran, Ruth Donnelly, Margaret Hamilton, Donald Meek, Fuzzy Knight, Willard Robertson, George Moran, Jackie Searl, Fay Adler.

LITTLE to recommend it. I like the brand of comedy Bill Fields dishes out, but the weak story background we have here is too great a burden for him to carry alone. He gets no help from Mae West who still relies upon her hips to carry the burden of her performance.

I have no quarrel with hips as necessary adjuncts to human locomotion, but I do object to them as a media of expression. I have seen all the pictures in which Mae West has appeared, and have grown weary of the succession of duplications of the characterization she contributed to the first, which, if memory serves me correctly, entertained me mainly by virtue of the strength of the story it told.

Here we have a story devoid of cleverness to keep continuous the interest of the audience. It has clever people in it and no fault can be found with the direction Edward Cline gave it, but on the whole it proves more boring than entertaining. That is my individual opinion. The story obviously was designed solely to string together the appearances of the two stars—the only kind of story we might have expected when the credits revealed it was written by the two stars. If Universal had employed trained screen writers to provide an intelligent screen play, the stars would have appeared to better advantage than they do in one created by themselves solely to exploit themselves.

Universal has given *My Little Chickadee* a worthwhile production and a good cast, but the whole thing sums up to rather dull entertainment.

Not for children, and nothing in it to engage the attention of students of the screen. Ardent fans of W. C. Fields and Mae West may be satisfied with it. For exhibitors it will depend upon the box-office value of the star names.

Wallace Beery Is A Scallawag Again

THE MAN FROM DAKOTA, MGM

Producer Edward Chodorov
 Director Leslie Fenton
 Screen play Laurence Stallings
 Musical score: David Snell, Daniele Amfitheatrof.
 Art director Cedric Gibbons
 Associate art director Malcolm Brown
 Make-Up created by Jack Dawn
 Director of photography Ray June, ASC
 Film editor Conrad A. Nervig
 Cast: Wallace Beery, John Howard, Dolores Del Rio, Donald Meek, Robert Barrat, Addison Richards, Frederick Burton, William Haade, John Wray.

WHAT merit this picture has is due to the direction given it. It is the third production of feature length which Leslie Fenton has directed. In the other two he was fortunate in having stories which were worth while, and out of them he made pictures which stamped him as one of the most promising—if not the most promising—young directors in Hollywood. In *The Man From Dakota* he has a story which no director could make into completely satisfying screen entertainment, but Fenton's di-

rection gives it values which save it from becoming a complete loss.

The story takes us back to Civil War days and deals with the frustration of a plan of the Southern army to lead General Grant into a trap. Which genius on the Metro lot had the idea that while the soil of foreign countries is being drenched with soldiers' blood, is a good time to revive a bloody episode in our own history, I do not know, but I cannot commend the idea as one which will be accepted with favor by American audiences. War is one thing we would like to forget, and Metro goes to considerable expense to remind us of it, to sell us more of it in the guise of entertainment.

Story Is Mechanical

¶ The story is a spotty one, consisting of pieces which even good direction could not stick together closely enough to keep the uneven splices from showing. But it provides opportunities for three excellent main performances and quite a number of secondary ones. Wally Beery is again the roughneck scallawag, a characterization which has typed him so fixedly as to suggest the wisdom of permitting him to play something radically different to surprise and delight audiences everywhere. Dolores Del Rio comes back to us in this picture, ornaments it and contributes a performance which is one of the big features of the production. It takes forceful acting to justify her appearance, as a hole had to be cut in the story to make room for her, but the intrusion is justified by the strength of her contribution and is valuable as a reminder to producers that in her they have been overlooking an accomplished and beautiful actress.

John Howard is coming along rapidly, each of his performances being a little better than the one which preceded it. In *The Man From Dakota* he is really excellent, thanks to direction which permitted him to develop his characterization intelligently. All the others in the cast struggled gamely against the story odds which confronted them. The picture is given the complete production which characterizes every film Metro turns out. Ray June's camera had a wide range of light and shade

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to poke its nose into, and it brought to the screen many fine shots. Wide terrain, marching soldiers and artillery movements presented interesting problems in film editing, all of them being solved successfully by Conrad Nervig.

Rather a waste of a brilliant young director's genius. Selection of story a psychological blunder. Will not disappoint Berry fans, and all the performances will please. Hardly for children.

Tarkington Story

Much Modernized

SEVENTEEN, Paramount

Associate producer Stuart Walker
Director Louis King
Screen play: Agnes Christine Johnston, Stuart Palmer.

Based on the story by . . . Booth Tarkington
Based on the play by: Stuart Walker, Hugh Stanislaus Strange, Stanford Mears.

Director of photography . . . Victor Milner, ASC
Art directors Hans Dreier, Franz Bachelin
Editor Arthur Schmidt
Sound recording Earl Hayman, Walter Oberst
Cast: Jackie Cooper, Betty Field, Otto Kruger, Ann Shoemaker, Norma Nelson, Betty Moran, Thomas Ross, Peter Hayes, Buddy Pepper, Donald Haines, Richard Denning, Jody S. Gilbert, Paul E. Burns, Hal Clements, Edward Earle, Stanley Price, Joey Ray, Snowflake, Hattie Noel.

Reviewed by Bert Harlen

FRAGRANT with the sweet dreams of puppy love and brisking with the capers of adolescence, Booth Tarkington's famed *Seventeen* again comes to the screen. It is a highly modernized version of the story that Paramount presents. The snappy vernacular of yesteryear has been replaced by the snazzy vernacular of today; jitterbugging, roadsters, including a snorting jalopy emblazoned with epigrams, and a night club feature as youth's diversions. It was a right good tale Tarkington dashed off, one touching on fundamental attitudes and problems of youth—and of parents—and the yarn holds up staunchly for all its alterations and furbelows. Like a good piece of Georgian architecture, it can stand a lot of tampering with.

If the present piece seems sometimes just a little cluttered with modernity—and a Hollywood brand of modernity—and if one misses a certain simplicity and homespun quality that lent an engaging spirit to the book, nevertheless *Seventeen* provides buoyant and interest-sustaining entertainment. The picture has considerable nostalgic appeal too; indeed the elders may take to the film more than adolescents, who, even as the characters herein portrayed, often like to imagine themselves as other than they are. The Paramount people are leaving no stone unturned to impress the budding generation with the notion that it is being glorified, however. Sev-

enteen misses, age 17, were brought from 17 states to attend the preview and be wined and dined—or maybe only dined. What with the preview taking place on Valentine day and all the youthful flurry and palpitation, it was really a gala occasion.

Of Jackie and Willie

¶ Most of the familiar incidents of the story are at least represented in Agnes Christine Johnston's and Stuart Palmer's screen play—Willie Baxter's prying and revealing little sister, his borrowing father's dress suit to impress the flirtatious Lola Pratt from Chicago, and so on. A good deal of action here hinges around Willie's trading his old jalopy in for a presentable roadster and then trying to raise the money for the payments.

Needless to say, Jackie Cooper gives a convincing, an amusing and appealing interpretation of young Baxter. Seemed to me, though, that in the direction some opportunities for humor were overlooked in not emphasizing more the boy's aspiration to maturity, his assumption of manly and worldly characteristics, which practice is one of the most amusing tendencies of adolescents. In this and in several other directions—for instance, in giving out his money so generously at the night club—Cooper seems a mite too casual. Naturalness and casualness are not just the same things. Characterization implies the assemblage of dominant characteristics. It is a good show Cooper gives, within a certain interpretative range, but it is hardly a departure from other portrayals he has given. Willie Baxter is certainly a character.

Betty Field Registers

¶ As the streamlined Lola, Betty Field is a very scintillating and beguiling young creature. The new Lola evidently is a spoiled brat, refers to her parents, who had obstructed her elopement, as "obstreperous," addresses all the young men as "darling," goes in for too much make-up, including artificial eyelashes. She flaunts too what she considers the last word in vernacular—many a sentence takes an interrogative upswing at the close, with greatly altered, sometimes uncertain meaning, thusly, "Who do you think you are—anyhow?" Miss Field carries off the part capitably, "but definitely."

Louis King's direction, by and large, is most whimsical and sympathetic. Good performances are gotten from a number of other young people, Norma Nelson, as sister Jane, Betty Moran, Buddy Pepper, Donald Haines and the promising Peter Hayes. Of the adults, Ann Shoemaker gives an understanding performance as Willie's mother, and Otto Kruger does well as the father. Art direction is discerning, the photography of Victor Milner pleasant. Good editing

is contributed by Arthur Schmidt. Associate producer was Stuart Walker, who had a hand in adapting and staging the legitimate stage version some years back.

Tarkington's noted story of adolescence has been given a good many furbelows of modernity, but the present version has human-interest appeal and humor. Youth does not change in fundamental ways, nor do its problems. Elder spectators should like the picture as well as the younger ones, possibly more so, for it has a nostalgic quality. Emphasis is decidedly on humor, however. Contains nothing especially to call to the attention of study groups.

Blonde Damsel Is Really A Meanie

FREE, BLONDE AND 21, 20th Century-Fox

Executive producer Sol M. Wurtzel
Director Ricardo Cortez
Original screen play Frances Hyland
Director of photography . . . George Barnes, ASC
Art direction Richard Day, George Dudley
Film editor Norman Colbert
Musical director Samuel Kaylin
Cast: Lynn Bari, Mary Beth Hughes, Joan Davis, Henry Wilcoxon, Robert Lowery, Alan Baxter, Katharine Aldridge, Helen Ericson, Chick Chandler, John Valerie, Elise Knox, Dorothy Dearing, Herbert Rawlinson, Kay Linaker, Thomas Jackson, Richard Lane.

Reviewed by Bert Harlen

MODELED along the lines of the recent *Hotel For Women*, this one again lets us in on the gambols of the girls in a New York hostelry for the fair sex. And what a gilded and glamorous life the fair ones lead. Dates to the point of ennui—though largely with sojourning buyers and such—expensive clothes, elegant apartments, all these and more the big city has showered in their laps. Evidently all the young things are eminently successful in one way or another, though two or three are preening their fine feathers in a gilded cage, if you possibly can conceive what I mean. Doubtless many a small-town maiden will decide she is wasting her fragrance on the desert air and entrain for the big city after *Free, Blonde and 21*—which takes the crocheted something or other for tawdry titles—has been screening at the local Bijou.

Those not so susceptible to cinematic enchantments will find the picture fair entertainment of the popular sort, cream-puff fare. The spectacle of a cross-section of metropolitan femininity, eager and foot-loose, is diverting; the theme has not been overworked—as yet. Most of the story turns out to hinge around a blonde miss who is certainly a meanie. First she fakes an attempted suicide in an effort to scandalize a married man who has chosen between her and his wife—though the ruse does not work—and then nearly ruins the life of

a handsome young doctor she comes to know at the hospital.

Part Seems Rather Synthetic

¶ Mary Beth Hughes certainly brings an abundance of lush and sensuous qualities to the role. In a recent review I said that no young screen actress I had seen struck me as being more favorably endowed for filling the niche of the late Jean Harlow. Now and then, however, we feel her performance could have been further developed, and occasionally her essayal does not quite ring true. Doubtless Miss Hughes can stand some further grooming in the art of Thespiis, but for these fluctuations she is not altogether responsible. The part itself seems to be rather synthetic. One wonders if Frances Hyland, the capable writer of the screen play, did not think up at least some of the girl's meannesses before she thought up the girl.

At any rate, the girl's resourcefulness at deception does not always seem consistent with her naive behavior at other times. Motivation of the character might have been improved at times, I believe, by the direction, especially in a concluding scene when she is being grilled by the police. Apropos of the screen play, a good many cash customers are going to wonder how the young doctor manages to carry the injured gunman—the lass tells him the latter is her brother—into a beach house belonging to a friend. Surely the place would have been locked.

Lynn Bari Agreeable

¶ Direction by Ricardo Cortez is generally competent. Lynn Bari, in a not very eventful part, again shows increasing finesse and sparkle. I should not be surprised to see her in a starring spot some day. Joan Davis is highly amusing as an officious maid, and Henry Wilcoxon, Robert Lowery, and Alan Baxter give substantial shows. The sets by Richard Day and George Dudley, with decorative frills by Thomas Little, are, as I have intimated, extremely lade-da. George Barnes' photography adds to the glamour. Despite the large num-

ber of characters involved, the film moves along at a good clip, indicating dexterous editing on the part of Norman Colbert.

A fairly diverting yarn of the popular sort. The goils from the shoit factory may like it a good deal; more discriminating patrons may deem it somewhat too fluffy. Contains nothing for study groups. Not the best fare for children.

Gentleman Crook Quite a Fellow

THE LONE WOLF STRIKES, Columbia

Producer Fred Kohlmar
Director Sidney Salkow
Screen play Harry Segall, Albert Duffy
Story Dalton Trumbo
Based upon novel by Louis Joseph Vance
Photography Henry Freulich
Cast: Warren William, Joan Perry, Eric Blore, Alan Baxter, Astrid Allwyn, Montagu Love, Robert Wilcox, Don Beddoe, Fred A. Kelsey, Addison Richards, Roy Gordon, Harland Tucker, Peter Lynn.

Reviewed by Bert Harlen

THOROUGHLY a master-mind is the Lone Wolf, who here temporarily forsakes a life of retirement, a lush existence amid his domestic aquarium of many rare fish, and steps back into the hazardous pursuit of purloining. This time, though, the fellow is on the side of justice, having consented, as a favor to an attorney friend, to recover a string of valuable pearls from a gang of crooks. And what strategy the man adopts; people are mere puppets in his hands. No untoward development can disconcert him; he can turn any situation to his advantage. Of course, it is all so much blarney, but there is a certain satisfaction in watching a fellow creature be so enormously clever. Rather flattering to the species.

The finesse with which Warren Williams interprets the character is the primary asset of the picture. The eventfulness of the story, rapid movement, and some effective suspense are other good points. It is a crook drama of standard entertainment value.

Some Loose Threads

¶ As usual, fortune smiles upon our gentleman crook—pardon me, ex-crook. People accept phony pearls without bothering to examine them. People fall into his trap exactly as he planned they would. The principal threads of the plot are brought together at the conclusion and tied in a nice big bow, the crooks and police coming together at just the right time and place. At that, there are a few threads left loose. I cannot remember that the murder of the girl's father was pinned on anybody, which was one of the Wolf's asserted objectives. Nor can it be proven that a

man and woman who first purloined the necklace, ever had it.

Outstanding in the supporting cast are Eric Blore, Astrid Allwyn, Montagu Love. Joan Perry is satisfactory as the heroine, thought the fact that the girl she portrays makes an almost constant nuisance of herself, following the hero around and gumming up his plans, renders the actress's appearances on the screen not always popular. Sidney Salkow has given good journeyman direction. The screen play was by Harry Segall and Albert Duffy, based on an original by the gifted and prolific Dalton Trumbo.

A crook drama of a standard sort. Substantial fare for a supporting position on the bill. Has nothing for study groups. All right for children. If they ask how, if crime does not pay, the Lone Wolf could have retired so comfortably, cook up something about his Aunt Lulu.

ENTERTAINMENT

EVERYONE is talking about entertainment. Now, just what is it? It runs the gamut from the jig-saw puzzle to the football game, from the fun of old maid to pinochle. It includes the country dance and the fancy-dress ball. It vaults from leapfrog to the Olympic Games, from the rodeo to the Grand Opera. It projects from the toy lantern to the technicolor film. It extends from a labor of love to revelry and carousal. All—for one purpose; to amuse, divert or recreate the participants.

The Ancient Greek sought his relaxation in the race and the arts. The Roman, as exaggerated by Nero at the burning of Rome, gloated in debauchery and dissipation. The Egyptian luxuriated at the festival on the Nile. The Englishman thrilled at the Derby or Cricket. The Spanish senorita flirted at the bull fight or sparkled at the fiesta. The Norseman fused with the Midsummer's Eve merrymaking. Our Colonial dames and sires disported in the Quadrille or curtsied and bowed in the stately minuet. The South Sea islander regaled his queen at the Feast of the Flowers. The Oriental sprinted and dashed at the gymkhana. All, as some sage has said, for the feast of reason and the flow of the soul.

Varied as the individual; diffuse as his ambitions; far-flung as his tastes; widespread as his ideal is man's entertainment.

Who dares to hold a cold concrete cube of ice in his hand and keep it so? Who is so bold as to try to pick up the drops and reassemble them as a complete entity? Who has the courage to interpret conclusively the nebulous term, entertainment?

ISABELLE DANIEL.

HOLLYWOOD DOG TRAINING SCHOOL



CARL SPITZ, Owner

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The Listening Post

(Comments on Radio)
(In Hollywood)

BY
HOWARD WALTER FISK

WHEN KNX, now the key station for the West Coast for the Columbia Broadcasting System, first went on the air—really, the very first time—the editor of the *Hollywood Spectator* stepped up to the mike and said, "This is KNX, the Voice of Hollywood." From that day to this—now more than ever before—KNX has been and is truly the voice of Hollywood, the one station in the world which is more closely associated in the public's mind with the picture industry than any other.

Thus, we might say, that the *Spectator* was the first to recognize that this station would become the important link between filmdom and the rest of the nation that it has become.

For some time the editor and staff of the *Spectator* have considered adding comments on radio to the contents of the magazine. Today's page is the start. Only time will tell us whether to keep it up and whether it will be appreciated by the folk of the radio. No promises are made as to what we shall, or shall not do. Certainly as long as this writer has anything to do with the page, he will follow the established policy of the magazine—the truth as he hears it, come the hot place and high water.

Mush and Mikes

Why is it that so many of our top motion picture stars are such flops on radio? There are quite a number of them who just cannot seem to click, and yet they are called back time and time again by the agencies handling the shows. The effect of their radio appearances, as far as this scribe feels, is that they have said to themselves, "Here's a chance to pick up a little extra money—my name will carry me." The fact is, their names do not carry them with Mr. and Mrs. John Q. Public, and such bad performances are bound to affect the "take" at the box-office when their pictures are shown. Radio is an audible art, not a visual medium, and no matter how effective a star might be in pictures, when he or she mushes into a mike the millions of listeners twist the dial to points starboard, and in a hurry.

Roses to Rosemary

Rosemary De Camp has long been one of our favorite radio actresses. For a couple of seasons now she has had the colorless role of Judy in *Dr. Christian*. Then she went on *I Want a Divorce*, and with telling effect. Her support of William Powell recently on *Silver Theatre* was a swell job. I am glad she is getting better breaks. She is as good, in most respects, as Lurene Tuttle, Helen Woods and others more favored in the past. And she improves in her work

with every boost in billing. A rose to Rosemary.

And to Nan Grey

The several picture actresses, appearing frequently on radio, who please me most with their voices and talent are—cheers for the Irish!—the Maureens, O'Hara and O'Sullivan, Geraldine Fitzpatrick and (no Irish here) Nan Grey, who is heard each week on *Those We Love*. Some day in the near future it is our purpose to devote some space to a comparison of the two top serials *One Man's Family* and the Agnes Ridgeway ("TWL") script. But for the time being, here is a rose for Nan Grey. Her voice is so pleasing, her character of Kathie so well done. A grand combination of writing and acting. Universal has a real property in Nan, who has a bright future.

Odds and Ends

Do you agree that the *Dr. Christian* scripts have been much better this season than last? I think so—even though they go a bit overboard on hokum at times.

Aside to Mark Finley of KHJ: I have taken a rain check on that visit to your television broadcast. I am intensely interested, but have been very busy. Save me a seat.

Late congratulations item: To KMPC for its Columbia affiliation and for its sports round table with Claude Newman, Gene Coughlan, Max Stiles, John Connolly and Ed Kauch, five triple-threat players.

If Virginia Sale of *Those We Love* is not a reincarnation of Aunt Josephine who lived next door to my grandmother, she is getting ghostly coaching from the old lady. Every time she speaks I am transported to Hale, Carroll County, Missouri (pop. 400), and twenty-odd years drop off my life (in imagination only).

LISTENING TO AIR SHOWS

SILVER THEATRE (Sun., KNX-CBS): Conrad Nagle is director of this series which is sometimes pure silver and other times has a "tinny" ring to it. Often it proves the radio players who support the stars are much the better actors.

PULL OVER NEIGHBOR (Mon., KHJ): An interesting and wholly painless way in which to learn about your California. Some of the odd facts brought are surprising, many humorous.

BERGEN - MCCARTHY (Sun., KFI-NBC): They said that Bergen could not hold this program up without its former bolstering. He is. And thank heaven he has spared us a torch singer,

although at times Vera Vague is about as bad.

JOHNNY MURRY (Daily, KFI): An early morning chat, presented in a pleasing manner and with highly interesting material.

LUX RADIO THEATRE (Mon., KNX-CBS): This is the most carefully and effectively produced of any radio show. The material, both writing and acting, is not always as strong as it might be, but the flawless production makes you think it is. (Cecil B. De Mille, director.)

ARCH OBLER'S PLAYS (Sat., KFI-NBC): Obler is considered a genius, and I confess that he has written some stuff which I would have given my eye teeth to have written. But—week in and week out—these plays are (I cannot resist it) Obler-rated. They have, however, fine casts, but the pace of the scripts makes a jackrabbit out of a tortoise.

BOB HOPE (Tues., KFI-NBC): Ye gods. Every week the same thing. Fun. FUN. FUN. If I were a college freshman, I would be madly in love with Judy Garland's voice, even though I had never seen her. Jerry Colonna is either v.g. or utterly n.g.—no half-way measures with him. "Brenda and Covina" are now stale stuff!

HOLLYWOOD PLAYHOUSE (Wed., KFI-NBC): Charles Boyer has always impressed me as being utterly ineffective on the air, as compared with his splendid screen appearances. But—mark this well—there has seldom been a finer radio characterization than his *Cyrano*. There was a job!

TEXACO STAR THEATRE (Wed., KNX-CBS): The commercials on this show stress the fact that, "Your motor starts cold but runs hot." This show starts hot and runs cold! The half produced in Hollywood with Ken Murray, Kenny Baker, Irene, Frances Langford and Jimmy Wallington, does a pretty good job of getting the hour off to a warm start, but those New York half-hour dramas are so, so dull and so badly produced. (Aside to Ken Murray, "The Murray Family" sketches are using up your anti-freeze.)

GOOD NEWS (Thurs., KFI-NBC): Somehow this show never quite clicks, and I think it is because there are too many people on it who are trying to be funny. Bill Gargan and Benny Rubin over-do their stuff (make it shorter and funnier), Baby Snooks (Fanny Brice) is always up to snuff. And, is Meredith Willson the maestro or the minstrel man? He cannot be both for my money. Edward Arnold m.c.'s, and it is a tough job on that show!

Film Music and Its Makers

BY
DAVID BRUNO USSHER

REAL SCREEN SCORE

¶ Those who are familiar with Max Steiner's work covering the last half dozen years will agree, I believe, that his music for the Warner picture *Dr. Ehrlich's Magic Bullet* rates among his most worthwhile contributions to the art of film music. In the first place, it aids the picture considerably. Here is screen music in the ideal sense, sustaining long scenes of subtle growing dramatic progress and intensity. It is one of the most difficult scores to describe because of its nature, which is unspectacular as the acting and the film as a whole. And this is as it should be, for otherwise it would be music leading its own course and separate life, and thereby be of no service to the screen.

One speaks so readily of the entertainment purpose of the film. Here, too, is entertainment, if it must be called thus, but of a gripping, deeply absorbing, stimulating and challenging nature. It is not a pretty subject, nor is it a pretty tale, that story of hide-bound scientists, of red-tape-stringers, filled with prejudice, and breeding the same, against a pioneer who has divinatory knowledge, but not the proofs as yet. A great human document is this film and Steiner has framed and lighted it musically with true loyalty to the screen.

Few Themes

¶ Steiner has based this long score for *Dr. Ehrlich's Magic Bullet* on a limited number of themes. The effect of the picture is heightened by music of paralleling rather than supplementary meaning. The intellectual, emotional, general dramatic grip, suspense, the struggle and the friendly warmth of the story have been intensified by music which does not criss-cross the mental picture with melodic lines. To repeat, it is a greatly sustaining score. The story of the film is that of a scientist, Robinson leaves no doubt of the man's compassion, honesty and selflessness of aim, of his gentleness and determination. The music makes him the finer, truer, softer and stronger.

A hero in a chemist's smock cuts no heroic figure, but the music is like the microscope Professor Ehrlich employs; it is like the very dyes by which he identified certain elements. A permeatingly psychologized score, which must sound engaging, although there is no "boy-meets-girl" romance in the story. There is the romance of science, and a deep love between Dr. and Mrs. Ehrlich. Steiner has emphasized that human relationship with charming felicity, using a waltz, employing the *Du, Du liegst mir am Herzen* folk song when Frau Ehrlich knows that Ehrlich will not be

many years more. The bond between an elderly couple facing the closing doors of life could hardly have been hinted with more lovable forcefulness. It would have been so easy to wax musically melodramatic or cheaply operatic. Perhaps it is something in the Viennese Steiner who could bring up this naively ardent melody and bring it in once more during the final farewell.

Music for Microbes

¶ Steiner has splendid collaboration from Hugo Friedhofer, his orchestrator, in shaping the music with a gradualness which is never monotonous, yet which expresses search and pressure towards a goal, and not violent, obviously climactic action. I would find it hard to define the themes of the various main characters. They melt into the general basic purpose of the music. There is healing theme, often heard in the high violoncello position. The music accompanying the episode in which the blind man begins to see again, is like the removing of tonal opaqueness, layer after layer. Clever indeed is the use of bells (light ones, probably glockenspiel) when Ehrlich, for the first time, shows his slide of microbe photographs, i.e., the bacilli light colored against black background. The bell-like notes have a quite evident significance. One can hear in the music also something descriptive of Ehrlich's words about the "slow forward turning motion of the bacilli." Notable bits of writing accompany also the scenes in the children's ward.

Eloquent Silences

¶ One has come to assume that it was well and proper not to have music during certain political speeches of Juarez and during *Lincoln In Illinois* on the ground that these were realistic moments. What of the music, then, during scientific discussions in this screen play of Dr. Ehrlich and his magic bullets? It is a very real and quietly bitter quarrel when Ehrlich and Behring part ways at a critical moment, yet the use of a waltz is quite natural, and it still is natural when the waltz turns into an indication of something deeply disturbing having transpired.

I have not the space to point out when Steiner, during some of Robinson's most profound moments (and he is immensely moving, true of detail and emotionally affecting always) withdraws music altogether and leaves the scene exclusively to Robinson. Problems have been solved here practically, for which one cannot set up rules. Story, script, direction, the actor—they are values never twice alike, yet the com-

poser has provided a tonal counter-part as natural and varied as a man's shadow in the presence of the sun or the moon. Steiner is a natural composer for the screen.

In this production a great deal of music occurs during dialogue. I am glad to say that music never interferes with the dialogue, partly thanks to the Steiner-Friedhofer treatment, also thanks to good recording and dubbing. Irving Rapper, director of dialogue; Robert R. Lee in charge of sound, and general music director, Leo F. Forbstein, all worked toward excellent results.

GULLIVER AGAIN

¶ **OPINIONS** differ quite often not only regarding the character, but also relative to the amount of music in a motion picture production. The nature of the story, more often yet, the preference and the pocketbook of the producer determine the answer rather than any principle. There is general agreement only in the case of animated (i.e., cartoon) motion pictures, which are accompanied invariably by music from start to finish. The latest example of this unanimity of opinion comes to the screen now in the Fleischer-Paramount production of *Gulliver's Travels* for which Victor Young has composed a cleverly atmospheric score.

As many as seven songs occur in the film which runs less than ninety minutes. If the high-rating of such tunes as *Faithful Forever*, *Hap-Hap-Happy Day* and *I Hear a Dream* is any indication of the ability of Producer Max and Director Dave Fleischer to pick "best sellers," then they were right. How these songs will do for the film in years to come remains to be seen.

About Songs

¶ In other words, songs can soon sound "dated." However, music so organically part of atmosphere and action as Young's, without any attempt other than to strengthen the visual in its own terms of rhythm and color, is apt to share more fully the longevity which one may predict for *Gulliver's Travels*.

I have no fault to find with *Faithful Forever* and the *Dream* by Rainger and Robin, nor with *Happy Day* which is accredited to Messrs. Timberg-Neiburg Sharples. They are quoted at the head of weekly "hit parade listings" in the trade papers, but at present I can say but very little for them. Perhaps if I hear them again under less noisy circumstances than the other night I may change my mind. But fully half of the seven songs, I am convinced, are below

average ingenuity. They lack spirit.

Two nationally popular singers, Jessica Dragonette and Lanny Ross lend their voices to the princess and the prince, who, of course, supply the romantic element. None of the singing sounds particularly endearing. In fact, the first soprano solo song is marred by a continuous and jittery tremolo, and Lanny Ross does not sing evenly all the time, despite the simplicity of the melodies.

Artistic Skill

¶ *Gulliver's Travels* is such excellent entertainment, and such a high blend of mirth, satire and inventively applied artistic skill, that the weaknesses I have mentioned matter little. I know that Dave and Max Fleischer have spared no efforts to serve beauty quite as much as necessary box-office considerations. They have served the screen well and I am sure with due material gain as well.

Both Fleischers have planned and made *Gulliver's Travels* with acute understanding and concern for musical possibilities. Not only had every scene been calculated in terms of beats and measures, so as to leave Composer Young room to make naturally and dramatically coursing music, but the visual action has been designed with a sense of phrasing, rhythm and long sustained cadence, which makes the complete picture something enjoyable in the sense visual action rhythm and flow.

This has, of course, helped Young in writing the score, difficult as it must have been to compose music for a picture containing so much minute and so much simultaneous, and often speedy motion. He has succeeded brilliantly, in terms of action and moods.

Clever Ideas

¶ Perhaps the Fleischers thought it wise to provide points of rest in the constant movement of story-action when they left space for seven songs, although two of these tunes are lively enough, especially the *All's Well*. For that matter one of the chief action motives in the entire film is based on the quarrel and the war between two Lilliputian kings as to which song shall be sung at the wedding of their children.

It would blunt the point of Fleischer humor to tell more, except that later on both songs are aptly combined into one. This is a film-musical idea, much to their credit.

Young has written capital music for the grand "alarum" when Gabby races up hill and down dale like streaked lightning to spread the horror tale of the presence of the giant on the beach. The mobilization music preceding the war is neat, too.

One of the most adroit and minutely elaborate pieces of musical writing occurs during the tying and hoisting up

of Gulliver, ending with genuine sunrise music. Badly reproduced at the preview, it sounded then monotonous.

The search for the Giant at night on the beach, when Young counterpoints the flitting lantern lights, the music of the waves, also episodes for Bombo's spies and for his bird-messengers, are but a few instances in a fascinatingly illustrative cartoon score.

* * *

Columbia Recordings include a *Bala-laika* album featuring Ilona Massey and Nelson Eddy. Decca has two more picture albums in the offing. One is to contain all the film songs Marlene Dietrich has sung, beginning with *Blue Angel*. The other album is devoted to Disney's *Pinocchio*. Curiously enough, the musical director for the last named is Victor Young, composer-conductor for the feature-length cartoon *Gulliver's Travels*.

* * *

Edmund Goulding will direct a Warner Brothers re-filming of Margaret Kennedy's amusing and yet by no means entirely light novel *The Constant Nymph*. It contains psychological problems of broad character, complicated by a composer's temperament. Whoever will be assigned to do the score has a wonderful chance for pointed and poignant musical hinting. The film contains a concert episode in which a symphony is being premiered. In the London-made film a part of a *Sinfonietta* by Goossens has been interpolated. Warners should have music written for the occasion, and it might be based on thematic material used earlier in the film. Goulding, it is good to know, is a music-minded screen director, but so are Jack Warner and his production chief, Hal Wallis.

Books and Films

By Ina Roberts

¶ The Foster Memorial Library at Pittsburgh University (Stephen Foster was born at Pittsburgh) produced photographs and drawings of his birthplace that enabled Twentieth Century-Fox to re-create the house for *Swanee River*. In addition the library helped materially in showing the studio what Don Ameche, Andrea Leeds and Al Jolson should look like in their respective roles of Foster, his wife and E. P. Christy, the minstrel man.

Closer cooperation between films and museums is to be desired. This is still another strand among the many that are weaving films into the fabric of our national life. That films are realizing their responsibility in the matter is evidenced in the article following.

I have mentioned before the fact that recent films based on the history of

various cities is bringing those cities closer to all of us; the premieres held in the towns bring actual business, something most places and most people need today. Perhaps the time is coming when we shall realize that it is not competition that is the life of trade; it is co-operation. Competition helps one (perhaps); cooperation helps all concerned.

The \$75,000 Dr. Paul Ehrlich collection gathered by Warners for props in *The Magic Bullet* will be sent to New York for exhibition at the premiere. Let us hope this collection will finally find its way to the appropriate Museum.

Films and Museums

¶ I quote in the following Walter Wanger, newly elected president of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences: "The 8,500 creative artists of Hollywood and the 85,000,000 weekly theatregoers of the United States have more in common than mere entertainment," says Mr. Wanger. "The screen is the greatest single social influence, expanding as well as interpreting the American way of living for the whole world. There should be closer understanding between the film creators and their audience."

Wanger Speaks

¶ The premiere of *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* at Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tennessee, January 27th was a triple jubilee, commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the University and the film industry, also of the nearby city of Middlesboro, Kentucky.

As part of the celebration, the Lincoln University is offering two prize scholarships to high school seniors in the United States who write the best essay on the subject, "A Student Looks at Abe Lincoln in Illinois."

The first prize will be a four-year scholarship covering room, board and tuition; the second, a scholarship covering one-half these expenses. The contest will begin on Lincoln's birthday, 1940 and end at midnight May 15, 1940. Winners will be announced June 3, 1940. Robert E. Sherwood, author of the Pulitzer Prize play and adapter of the film, will be one of the judges; the others include University officials.

* * *

We never know which minute will be our next. Nan Grey's interest was aroused in a new hobby when she saw the array of pewter ware used as props in the kitchen and dining room sets of *The House of Seven Gables* now in production at Universal Studios. As soon as she finishes work on the film Nan will concentrate on getting a collection of early New England pewter ware.

★ When block-booking is abolished the exhibitor will need a source of unequivocally reliable reviews. The *Spec-tator* affords them.

Screen Academy and the Field It Covers

By Donald Gledhill

Executive Secretary, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for publication in the Spectator and the Journal of Educational Sociology, New York

MENTION the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in almost any part of the civilized world and you will hear the statement: "Oh, yes, that's the organization which presents gold Statuettes, called 'Oscars,' for the outstanding achievements in motion pictures each year."

The annual Awards selection, however, is only one of the Academy's activities, the others being of specialized importance within the industry and not brought to general public attention. The major functions of the Academy since its inception in 1927 have been to uphold the cooperative idea in a highly competitive and temperamental milieu, to maintain authoritative informational facilities, and to serve as the social tree from which have sprung (sometimes explosively) most of the other important organized talent groups within the motion picture production industry. The word production is emphasized as the Academy has at no time been involved with either distribution or exhibition.

Prior to Its Founding

¶ Before the founding of the Academy there had been little attempt to organize groups among the picture people either for exchange of creative ideas, social activities or economic protection. Hollywood was a town of individualists, surging from the boom years following the war. If a studio and an artist had a contractual difference it was publicly aired in the courts. In the technical field each studio jealousy guarded whatever mechanical experiments were being made. Science was hardly aspired to and the mention of art was still very self-conscious.

No one conferred with anyone except his immediate employer. Each actor, director and writer stood alone and fought his own battles, although it should be pointed out that a good deal of camaraderie had carried over from the pioneering and bonanza periods. If the individuals were not organized as we think of organization now, neither were the studios. It was only toward the end of the era before sound that motion pictures became an integrated industry.

Originally Five Branches

¶ Then in May, 1927, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts was organized,

and Hollywood began to be group conscious.

The Academy was originally set up with five branches—Actors, Directors, Producers, Technicians and Writers. Each group had equal representation on the controlling Board of Governors and a semi-autonomous branch organization of its own. The late Douglas Fairbanks was elected first president. The decision to honor distinguished achievements was reached and the Annual Awards came into being.

Subsequent presidents have included Conrad Nagel, William C. de Mille, J. T. Reed, M. C. Levee, Frank Lloyd and Frank Capra (current), each serving more than one term. The late Irving G. Thalberg was active in the leadership for many years. The present membership is about 800.

Stimulates Community Morale

¶ While the Academy from the beginning has been an exclusive, invitational organization, with professional achievement as a requisite, the idea of all branches of creative talent meeting around a common table has stimulated the morale of the entire community. The Academy was unique at its founding and still remains the only example in a major industry of a professional organization in which the responsible executives of competitive companies and a wide diversity of employees meet as individuals, discussing and taking action on industry problems.

The singular nature of picture production, in which a star or director may receive more salary than a ranking executive and in which the same individual may be employed as a writer a director and a producer in the same year, contributed to the practicality of this idea until the rising tide of strictly labor union organization, following the NRA, provided more forceful machinery for dealing with economic problems and the Academy withdrew entirely from the economic field.

Takes Over Relief Fund

¶ The theory of individual personal participation on the basis of general industry good citizenship, without regard to economic status, continues to characterize the Academy and provides effective machinery for cooperative activities.

One of the first responsibilities early recognized by the new Academy was that of caring for the needy veterans of even so young an industry. In 1929, one of the most important steps ever taken in Hollywood was that of remov-

ing the Motion Picture Relief Fund from the Community Chest and establishing it within the industry, the means of assessing employed actors a percentage of their salaries for support of the fund being worked out by the Academy.

With technicians from all studios drawn together for the first time came the realization that Hollywood should have a central group of engineers working for the common advancement. The result was the setting up of the Academy Research Council. The best technical brains of all major studios here work together with the result that their research, coordination and standardization have been worth untold thousands of dollars to the studios. The abrupt change to sound pictures in 1929-30 brought increasing importance and complexity to this department.

Given Individual Importance

¶ Returning to the matter of group consciousness, the fact that the Academy was organized by branches made each one more conscious of its individual importance. Together with the stresses set up by the NRA, the result was that in the spring of 1933 the Screen Writers Guild came into active life with much the same leadership as had been elected in the Academy writers branch, but with a definitely labor union organization and theory. Similarly and shortly thereafter the Screen Actors Guild, the Society of Motion Picture Film Editors and the Screen Publicists Guild.

In 1928 the cameramen organized under the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees and Moving Picture Machine Operators, better known as the IATSE. By 1930 the sound technicians and laboratory workers were organized under the IATSE and group consciousness in motion pictures since then has so kept pace with the general trend of all industry that practically every unit group has its own organization, including even office workers. Hollywood has been in almost constant internal strife for the past five years, a condition now gradually coming to balance as the various groups recognized labor unions.

Awards Become Important

¶ Throughout these years, while bitterness and strife among various groups and the producing companies have been endemic, while group fought group as well as the studios, the Academy has continued as one organization in Hollywood with a cooperative viewpoint and consistent purpose. Each year the Annual Awards of Merit have become of more importance to the Industry and

of wider public interest because the Academy stresses the best in motion pictures. The awards have had a marked influence on the making of better films, not only in Hollywood but throughout the world. Creative artists prize the Academy awards as an accolade from their peers and strive to merit it.

While voting was originally limited to members, in recent years the various Hollywood groups have joined in the balloting, under the continuous sponsorship of the Academy. The actors nominate for actor awards, writers for writing awards, directors for the best directing, and the technicians devote weeks to committees and special showings in the selection of scientific award winners. The final ballot goes to all groups, including extras.

Library of Great Value

¶ The Academy has built up a specialized library on all phases of motion pictures until today it ranks among the top four of its kind in the world. As almost the only source of such information in Hollywood, the studios, writers on film subjects, and the public depend upon this library for reference and statistical data. Valuable collections of stills, early trade publications, year-books and scripts have contributed to its growth during the past year.

Public goodwill is also cultivated for the industry by the Academy in many practical ways. The first university courses in photoplay appreciation were set up with Academy cooperation, and helpful contact is maintained with schools, public libraries and organizations taking an intelligent interest in films. The studios turn over to the Academy library a heavy volume of mail from students and individuals concerned with more serious questions than are handled by the fan mail and publicity departments. Inquiries may be sent simply to the Academy, Hollywood, or to the more specific address: Academy Library, 1455 North Gordon Street, Hollywood.

Effected Great Savings

In a direct way the Academy has saved motion picture actors and actresses thousands of dollars during the past three years. Previously Hollywood was overrun with private "casting directories"—publications containing the photographs and credits of players. These were commercially exploited, and prices kept beyond the means of lower-paid actors. In 1937 the Academy established a unified players directory service to end all such racketeering. In this publication all names are treated alike, with the biggest star allowed no larger photograph or more space than the most

minor "bit" player. As a result the commercial directories have left the field and nearly all players requiring such representation use the Academy to the advantage of themselves and the studios.

Until a few years ago there was no central compilation of the screen credits and contributing credits which are so important to individual careers. The Academy now publishes a twice-monthly, cumulative bulletin of writer, director and production credits which is the official reference guide for the industry.

Common Meeting Place

¶ While Hollywood is the accepted center of the film world, it remained for the Academy to establish a common meeting place for creative personnel without regard to studio connection or branch of talent. The physical facilities have varied with the years but currently an Academy Review Theatre has been equipped with the finest sound projection. In it the Southern California Film Society, fathered by the Academy, holds weekly showings of films which would otherwise rarely be seen in Hollywood. These include classic films of the past, in many instances using the only print still in existence, together with unusual features from Europe and South America which are shown to the Academy membership and a limited additional audience.



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This Hollywood

BY
BERT HARLEN

A BIG BATTLE LOOMS

A DELUGE of propaganda pro and con the Neely bill will descend upon an innocent public during the next few weeks. With the anti-block booking measure already passed by the Senate and likely to come up for a vote before the House ere the month of March has closed, approving and disapproving factions are earnestly contending for the sympathy of Mr. John Public. Most of the campaigning against the bill is being waged by the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association, which comprises the eight major producer-distributor organizations. The most eager advocates of the bill are the independent theatre owners, though their indorsement is not unanimous, it must be said. Their principal mouth-piece is the Allied States Association of Motion Picture Exhibitors.

This latter organization is issuing a "white book," which will be devoted to rectifying assertedly misleading information disseminated by the former group. The Parent-Teachers societies and even the National Woman's Christian Temperance Union are to be among the recipients of the tract. On the other hand, no less than 1,000,000 booklets, entitled "Let's Kill the Movies! No. Let's Kill the Neely Bill," are to be circulated by the aroused Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association.

Labor Groups Involved

¶ The entire battle fronts are much too extensive to be surveyed here. Even the labor groups will probably enter the fray. The C.I.O. some months ago expressed itself as supporting the Neely Bill. Conversely, the A. F. of L. has taken a customarily counter position. In fact, I have already received some disaffirming material on the issue from that quarter. The contention may eventually even reach the screens of the country.

Mr. John Public up till now has remained disappointingly unconcerned about the issue, and largely, it would seem, because of the issue's complexity and the divergent analyses of the situation put forth by the opposing factions; for certainly the fate of the movies is a matter which should be of high concern to millions of fans. At any rate, John will have ample opportunity to become either thoroughly illuminated or more befuddled in coming weeks.

Other Side of It

¶ The *Spectator* has made no secret of its stand on the Neely Bill. Granting that a few provisions of the bill will need further interpretation and that its

passage will necessitate considerable readjustment within the industry, it believes the measure as a whole is a step in the right direction. The benefits its passage will bring to both the film industry and the public have been set forth too many times in recent months to need repetition here. Suffice to say that when an exhibitor has to buy fifteen pictures to get one or two he can use, there is something wrong somewhere. The film industry has had a long time to clean house from the inside and has not done it to everyone's satisfaction.

Nevertheless, it would be less than fair to deny the opposition a hearing. The following are some of the main arguments advanced by the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association against the bill, provided for our readers who have not yet had a booklet tossed their way. The substantialness of the various assertions the reader can judge for himself. They are as follows:

As Producers See It

¶ "The Neely Bill would destroy efficient, economical marketing of films. It would result in an increase in the cost of making films, or a decrease in the production value of pictures. It would result in financial disaster and chaos for the industry.

"It would open the way to private pressure censorship, thereby sharply restricting the freedom of the American people to make their own decisions in selecting their motion picture entertainment.

"It would result in increased admission prices for the public.

"It would reduce substantially the number of pictures produced each year.

"It would curtail, probably by as much as one-half, the number of people employed in the industry.

"It would wreck the Production Code, which assured decent and wholesome entertainment.

"It would bankrupt untold exhibitors, especially in small towns.

"It would wreck the present distribution system, which enables the smallest theatres in the country to play the identical pictures which play in the largest theatres, and at a reasonable rental price which the local exhibitors can pay, and with box-office admission prices which all the public can afford to pay.

"It would compel the motion picture industry to embark on an untried experiment over the protest of the overwhelming majority — at least 90 per cent — of those actually responsible for the making and marketing of motion pictures."

WHAT A PATRON THINKS

A PROPOS of Neely Bill, I am in receipt of an interesting letter from a modest one who prefers to be known as "A *Spectator* reader" should I refer to her comments, a letter which summarizes the viewpoints of the layman with respect to the Neely measure and other impending federal legislation designed to regulate the motion picture industry. I quote:

"Your excellent and thought provoking article, having to do with the changes that may be wrought in the motion picture industry by government legislation, moves one to say that you reviewers and critics are not the only ones who are doing some speculating as to the outcome. We motion picture patrons are doing a bit of the same, although perhaps along different lines.

"For instance, while we understand to a certain extent the processes of 'block booking' and 'theatre chains' and other technicalities having to do with the present method of distribution, it is, at the same time, all rather vague in our minds, and we feel that it is results alone that concern us. The method of accomplishment is up to the motion picture industry, if it wishes to build up what is now an anemic box-office.

"If we go on from there with a slight leaning toward the unit production—slight because we do not know a great deal about it, although it sounds good to us—and with a feeling that perhaps some independent producers in the field will do away with what has seemed to us to be a 'take it or leave it' attitude on the part of the industry. And yet, that could not have been true either, because what bad box-office such an attitude would be, wouldn't it?

"Hope that we will be spared the harrowing details of enormous production costs beats high in our hearts. Stupendous figures have been hurled at us until we have felt the burden to be more than we could bear. We also hope that the keynote of production under the new regime will be wholesomeness mixed with buoyancy—and I do mean buoyancy, which is something quite different than mere froth. In short, we motion picture patrons hope that the films (how we love 'em when they're good) are going to be better than ever (please note the absence of the word 'bigger')."

PRODUCTION PLANS ANNOUNCED

FEWER pictures are to be made during the 1940-41 season. Metro, Twentieth Century-Fox, and Paramount studios are each planning to offer exhibitors only forty features for this period. The Metro people's schedule for

this film year—terminating in August—is forty-six pictures. The Fox plant will have released fifty-two. These smaller production schedules are a good sign. Manifestly the studios have been turning out too many pictures, and smaller schedules should result in better quality in the run of releases.

Forty pictures a year is still too many, though. Probably not more than thirty features of any merit could be turned out by a single studio. Still, as I say, the reduction is a good sign.

Some To Be Made Abroad

¶ A small portion of these pictures will be made abroad, in England, probably half a dozen by each firm. Alarm over Big-Bad-Wolf Hitler seems to have subsided, and production chiefs are returning to the shores from which there was a summary exodus of Hollywoodites a few weeks back. The reason behind this braving of the bombs is to make use of profits which, by government decree, cannot now be taken out of England. Produced pictures can be.

HEARING THROUGH THE EYES

THOSE who have not of late reflected on the force of the silent pictures, how strongly they played on the imagination, should take note of the huge neon sign that tops the Hollywood Recreation Center, on Vine Street across from the N.B.C. studios. It pictures a bowling ball rolling toward a line-up of pins. The ball hits, there are chaotic neon flashes, the pins fly wildly. Your imagination does the rest; it makes you hear the ball hit—yes, sir, you can hear the ball's fierce, crackling, resounding impact with the pins. Watch it, sometime.

Cleveland Reader Gives Some Advice

ONE of the most active women in the potent Cinema Club in Cleveland, Ohio, is Bertelle M. Lytelle. In a letter to me, Mrs. Lytelle makes some discerning remarks it would profit both producers and exhibitors to read. The letter follows.—W. B.

You and the other reviewers have given us enthusiastic accounts of *Land of Liberty*, the movie history of our country prepared by the industry for the two fairs, and now to be available "for every school in the country." To me it seems that such a picture belongs in the community show rather than in the regular school; it is a review of history for the adult, instead of a presentation of the subject to the child who cannot understand so much at once, or who thinks he knows it all because he has seen such a film and so is less inter-

ested in studying in detail the various periods.

However, here in Cleveland it is impossible to show even "free" films without an overhead cost of \$35 to \$50, which must be born by someone. We of the Cinema Club believe that the present limitation that many films may not be shown where an admission fee is charged, should be changed to "may not be shown for profit," thus permitting a small admission designed to cover these necessary expenses.

Suggestions for Exhibitors

¶ You say you have a large circulation among exhibitors. We know you have among the producers. Don't you think it well to agitate for better showmanship on the part of the theatres? Isn't it time the old principle of offering something pleasant and something distasteful to everyone in the audience, with a prayer that enough of the pleasant comes last to cause forgetfulness of the unpleasant, be discarded at least on a few days of the week, and particularly at the week-ends when our young people attend in droves and are having formed their ideas of art, harmony, beauty as well as morals?

The better films movement, now powerfully aided by the study of movie art in the schools, is undoubtedly showing results at the box-office; otherwise how would any exhibitor dare to offer *On Borrowed Time* and *Lost Patrol* on the same Saturday-Sunday program, and expect to please his patrons? We are improving the demand for fine pictures and wholesome ones, but our people have many resources and are not compelled to patronize pictures they do not desire in order to see the ones that they do. How about justice to the pictures themselves?

Pleasing Double Bill

¶ Of course this is a plea for single feature programs, but a double bill that stands out as a pleasing memory was *Man of Aran* and *Unfinished Symphony*. It might be possible to develop audiences for special types of pictures for special nights and thus have an easy placing for the fine art, adult picture. Again, care could be exercised to make each program harmonious as to the major feature, and then advertise each program to its proper audience. This means not to push the advertising of *They Shall Have Music* among the athletic clubs and labor unions, nor expect the women's clubs to trust the judgment that urges them to attend either *Real Glory* or *Each Dawn I Die*. Also the advertising of the unusual picture must not be trusted to trailer and the regular theatre promotion. The "unusual" audience never hears about the picture until too late.

Another point: why must all pic-

ture shows follow the same pattern? I cannot recall a time when we had such a large and varied assortment of fine short subjects as at present. The best of them do not suit the double feature scheme, and are overshadowed in a single feature. I am thinking primarily of the short dramas of M-G-M and Vitaphone, secondly of the fine travel and novelty reels, and the new symphonic subjects from Paramount.

Shorts for Saturdays

¶ It seems practical to me for a centrally located theatre in our large cities to co-operate with the distributors in developing a Saturday audience for a two-hour show of these fine shorts. Advertising should be a week in advance; one frame in the lobby near the street carrying the coming program for the information of all passersby, the newspaper ad of the theatre carrying the line about "short subjects on Saturday" just as some advertise their "owl shows"; then a simple printed slip carrying the full program of next week's show to be distributed to this week's audience; these slips should also be bulletined or distributed through libraries and schools.

These films are largely documentary, and such a program, if well selected, should be a great cultural asset to any community. Why force such a program into the school houses and thus deprive it of the advantages of the theatre showing, the opportunity of reaching its greatest audience, and the inspiration for its artists of a greater recognition? Why not increase the use of these subjects? Why are the producers making them? Theatre men have told me the distributors will not co-operate in any such efforts to serve the public.

Afraid to Experiment

¶ The distributors control plenty of suitable houses to make the experiments themselves, and in Cleveland, at least, they are more accustomed to working with the Cinema Club and the Public Library than are the neighborhood theatres.

The industry deplores lost markets and lessening box-office, but is afraid to try experiments to have the maximum audiences for each picture, including the short subjects. Fewer pictures, but all good of their kind, and much better showmanship in program making and community service, is my suggestion for alleviating the financial difficulties of the box-office.

★ Nick Carter is to sleuth again. Metro has purchased over 1,100 of the Nick Carter stories, the entire Street & Smith library with the exception of twelve stories.

★ Wayne Morris has been signed by Warner Brothers for a fourth year. His new release is *Brother Rat and a Baby*.

You've DRIVEN us to it!

And We Don't Blame You

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Twice Monthly

Edited by WELFORD BEATON

Fourteenth Year

Los Angeles, California—May 1, 1940

Vol. 14—No. 26



EDMUND GOULDING

His brilliant direction of "Til We Meet Again" certainly entitles him to an even broader smile.

REVIEWED:
(Page 5)

Forty Little Mothers	★	'Til We Meet Again	★	Johnny Apollo
Buck Benny Rides Again	★	Two Girls on Broadway	★	1,000,000 B. C.
Dr. Kildare's Strange Case	★	Irene	★	The Saint Takes Over
Grandpa Goes to Town	★			Tomboy



From the EDITOR'S EASY CHAIR

SPECTATOR TO HAVE A BIRTHDAY

WITH its next issue Hollywood Spectator will enter its fifteenth year of effort to be of value to the motion picture industry as a business, and to its personnel as artists working in a medium which requires for its continued existence large financial returns on both the mental and material investment in its plants and product. During its fourteen years it has devoted millions of its words to the championship of screen art, but each such discussion was inspired by its conviction that only by meeting the demands of the art could the industry achieve the greatest possible material prosperity.

No thought expressed by the Spectator was inspired by consideration of its own material prosperity. As an advertising medium it has been ignored by those whom it has tried most to serve—the producers of motion picture entertainment. For the revenue essential to its continued existence it has been compelled to beg from the industry's personnel, whom also it has strived to serve.

Once more it appeals for the essential revenue. It asks those who approve at least its honesty, if not the logic of its opinions, the support it needs. It has but one thing for sale—advertising space. The next issue will be its Fourteenth Birthday Number. It hopes to have your advertisement in it.

* * *

IT IS WHAT WE AIMED AT

WRITES Edwin Schallert in reviewing "Vigil In the Night": "The quiet tone of nearly all conversations in the picture gives it singular power." To get this "singular power" in all pictures has been the reason for the Spectator's constant plea for conversations on the screen instead of bursts of oratory.

* * *

ACTING AND THE FILM BOX-OFFICE

QUOTING Jimmie Fidler on two of the Lane sisters, Rosemary first: "She studies the principles of acting, delving into the history of drama, applies herself like a leech to her music, and can expound by the hour on the technique of every great star in the business. In short, Rosemary's one absorbing interest in life is professional success. . . . Priscilla, on the other hand, doesn't seem a bit impressed by Hollywood's treasures. She takes her roles as they're assigned, races through them with a minimum of effort and a maximum of fun, and makes no bones about her will-

ingness to throw it all overboard if the whim happens to strike her. I think she'd cheerfully turn her back on pictures tomorrow if she decided that she could have a better time by doing so."

Then Jimmie Gets Inquisitive

¶ Jimmie proceeds to ask an interesting question: "In view of the fact that their backgrounds, personal charm and initial screen opportunities were approximately the same, which of the two sisters would you expect to be more important professionally? Rosemary, of course. Yet the reverse is true, and I doubt if there is a producer in Hollywood who can give you the exact 'why'."

Jimmie's doubt is well founded. If Hollywood had one producer who could give the "why," he would be the only one who never would be bothered with a shortage of talent for his leading roles; he could make new stars with every picture he made. But the interesting question about the two Lane sisters is easy to answer. Priscilla is the greater box-office attraction by virtue of her complete disregard for anyone's conception of rules which govern screen acting; she goes slap-bang at everything given her to do, gets oodles of fun out of doing it, gets her personality on the screen, and lets her audience know she is having a fine time, lets it get acquainted with her, puts it in sympathy with her joys and sorrows. She gives her audience what she feels.

One With Emotions, One With Head

¶ Rosemary gives her audience what she has learned. She has schooled her emotions to be expressed by rule. Priscilla acts with her emotions, Rosemary with her head. According to Jimmie, Rosemary has delved into the history of drama, and the deeper she delved the greater did she get away from screen requirements, as all histories of drama deal with its expression on the stage, none with its expression on the screen. The stage projects its message to the audience; the motion picture camera enters a scene, records the message, carries it to the audience. The only thing the two media have in common is their use of players as their tools.

In all the centuries of its history the stage never developed a Shirley Temple, a child who for years was the world's greatest box-office player. If the acting technique which distinguishes the stage constituted the requirements of the screen, a seasoned stage actor would head the film box-office list. But

only Mickey Rooney heads it, a youth still in his teens, the great stage player, one with years of training behind the footlights, ever has headed it.

Personality Versus Serious Student

¶ I do not contend there is no place on the screen for purely stage performances, for a display of the technique the stage teaches. We have had scores of brilliant performances by players who have come from Broadway to Hollywood, performances which have dignified the screen and given it artistic prestige; but the text of this discourse is the difference in popular appeal between a pleasing personality (Priscilla) and a serious student of dramatics (Rosemary) as film box-office assets. Making motion pictures is a business in which are invested billions of dollars throughout the world, therefore the box-office always must be the matter of first consideration.

Almost every day the cinema pages in the newspapers tell us the difficulty this producer or that one is having in finding the right player for a part in a picture he is casting. If from the first producers had looked for personalities instead of for skilled players, if they had not been stampeded by the conviction that the screen went stage when it went talkie, there would be available today a dozen players for every leading part which needed filling.

Spotting Talent Not Hard Job

¶ Spotting box-office possibilities is not difficult. Sometimes I feel I carry to excess my references to the Spectator's record in spotting prospective box-office personalities long before any producer has given them opportunities fully to display their wares. But my present argument calls for more such references. Two recent cases of the accuracy of the Spectator's guessing are those of Joan Fontaine, now starring in "Rebecca," which is doing big business wherever shown, in some cases breaking box-office records; and Anne Shirley, raised to stardom in "Saturday's Children." Of Joan I wrote (Spectator, June 5, 1937): "You may put her down as a young person who will achieve stardom rapidly."

Of Anne I wrote, under the heading "New Star Is Rising," a brief paragraph which sums up my theory of screen acting (Spectator, January 4, 1936): "One can see Anne's future in her fine eyes. They reveal her possession of the divine spark born in her, but which we mistakenly term genius. They suggest everything clean and sweet, with a hint of latent fire ready to burst into flame when the provocation is sufficient. The only obstacle that can stay her march into the hearts of the country is acting technique. The less she learns of acting, the greater will be her appeal. What she has to offer her audience was born in her and cannot be learned or polished in a dramatic school."

Our Guessing Batting Average

¶ Of the scores named by the Spectator as prospective box-office material, none who achieved prominence has failed to maintain such status after being raised to it. Bette Davis, Jean Arthur, Myrna Loy—

to mention only three to illustrate my point—were nominated for prominence by the Spectator when their names were virtually unknown by picture patrons. And now the reason for my I-told-you-so's:

If someone sitting in the audience can spot an unknown person on the screen and record his conviction that such person has everything needed to achieve success as a leading film player, why does it take picture producers so long to become convinced of the same thing? Why complain of a shortage in prospective star material when in almost every picture one sees there can be spotted at least one youngster who has everything it takes? If I can spot a young boy and harass a publicity department into finding out the name of the boy who stood third to the right of the star in a certain scene, why did not the producer of the picture spot the boy and do something about it? The name, I at last was informed, was Mickey Rooney.

The answer to the questions is that producers are looking for Rosemarys, not for Priscillas—are obsessed by the notion that they want actors and actresses to bring the stage with them to the screen. The box-office today is demonstrating the folly of it. The cure is to look for personalities, for Priscillas.

* * *

WERE FAR OFF ON THIS ONE

OF THE box-office prospects of "Rebecca" I wrote as follows in my review of the picture (Spectator, April 1): "A purely psychological drama, it is not for the casual film patron in search of light entertainment; it is too fine a creation to break box-office records, a fact no doubt apparent from the outset to Producer Selznick and regarded by him complacently, as 'Gone With the Wind' is attending to the money end of his business." "Rebecca" is proving a sensational box-office success wherever shown. At home it established a new record for an opening week at the Four Star; in New York it ran five weeks at the Music Hall; in Cleveland it gave a theatre its first hold-over in six years; in Chicago it followed the second week of "Young Tom Edison" into United Artists Theatre, "Edison" having done \$7,100, and "Rebecca" did \$23,000. (Figures by Variety.) Box-Office Digest says it is one of the biggest grossing pictures United Artists has had in twenty years.

* * *

SCREEN TALENT AND SHAVING CREAM

WHEN the passage of the Neely Bill ends block booking, there is going to be a revolution in production methods which will jar the whole film world of Hollywood. For one thing, only a small fraction of the talent contracts now in existence will be renewed. With their market being made uncertain by the sale of each picture after completion and on its own merits, instead of by contract before it is made, a practice the Neely Bill will outlaw, producers will not find it profitable to carry the present heavy load of financial obligation under which the contract system puts them. Players, writers, directors then will become custodians

of their own careers; no longer will their welfare be nourished by producers who must build up the names they have on contracts.

Under the new order of things the player, writer or director who will get the most work and earn the most money will be the one who most readily comes to producer minds, just as the shaving cream you buy is the one which most readily comes to your mind when you want some. Fundamentally, the sale of talent differs in no way from the sale of shaving cream. Neither can get anywhere without advertising, without being kept in the minds of its prospective customers.

We Give Fatherly Advice

¶ In asking for advertising patronage for its Fourteenth Birthday Number, which will be the issue following this one, the Spectator is told by many of its talented friends that if they advertised in it they would be hounded by a dozen other film publications. Of course, an obvious answer to that would be to tell each of the hounders to come around when it was celebrating its fourteenth birthday, that you always patronize Fourteenth Birthday Numbers. But the inspiration which prompted this discussion has more general application, was not intended as affecting only the Spectator.

Picture people should advertise if they expect to continue to sell their wares. Each one of them knows that over the years others with as much talent as he or she possesses have faded into oblivion because they were not talked about, because they did nothing to keep their names in the minds of the people who could employ them. Each person earning good money now should set aside a sum of money to be expended during the year in advertising in papers he feels would give him value for the money spent; each paper on the list should be notified that at a specified time it would get its share of the advertising budget, no more, no less, provided it did not make a nuisance of itself by asking that the time be advanced or its share of the budget be increased.

But of course this highly commendable system cannot be inaugurated in time to benefit the Spectator's Birthday Number. That should be a special dispensation to reward it for the fatherly advice it offers above.

* * *

ONE BOOK YOU REALLY MUST HAVE

NO LIBRARY in the office or home of anyone connected with the motion picture industry can be considered complete unless it contains the Film Daily Year Book. The twenty-second annual volume, 1125 pages in handsome white and gold binding, is now available. It is an extraordinary accomplishment in the way of compiling, presenting and indexing data on pictures and their people. Who wrote the story for this or that picture? Who played in it? What other pictures have the players to their individual credits? What pictures were produced in 1923? I could go on and on, listing thousands of questions

the valuable volume answers. In compiling and publishing it, Jack Alicoate, whose Film Daily since 1919 has been a reliable record of all the newsworthy activities of the film industry, gives the industry a volume of inestimable value to it. As a completed work it reflects the highest credit on its staff of compilers who worked under the guidance of its able editor, Chester Bahn. In case I have persuaded you that you must complete your library by finding shelf room for this indispensable volume, you can write to this address: Film Daily, 1501 Broadway, New York.

* * *

MENTAL MEANDERINGS

WHEN I look into a drawer filled with socks knitted for me by Mrs. Spectator, I think how selfish it is for me to have so many when Mahatma Gandhi apparently hasn't any. . . . Along our dirt road we put out receptacles filled with exhausted cans which a truck comes along and scoops up. This is can day; our box is on the parking strip. Lassie, the fat old dog who brought me a pudding dish and a gopher trap, is busy taking cans from the box and spreading them around it. Probably looking for something worth presenting to someone. From where I am sitting I can see her around the end of the hedge, but she obviously is having such a fine time I lack the heart to disturb her. . . . I am not so contented. I envy Lassie. The sun is shining, birds are singing, flowers are blooming, and here I sit, rebelliously trying to reach the bottom of the column while three flats of young flower plants are awaiting transfer to beds, the newly seeded side-lawn needs sprinkling, the Morning Glories need thinning, the Dahlia bulbs should be sorted, and—but what's the use? Ho, hum! Let's get on with it. . . . Somewhere southwest of us a hen has just laid an egg; I can tell by the cackle. Sounds carry a long distance in our quiet Valley. Somewhere northeast of us lives a man with the loudest sneeze in the world, one he leads up to with a fusillade of minor hi-hi-ho-hoes, ending in a grand explosion which prompts me to study the sky in his direction in expectation of seeing the top of his head soaring upward. . . . Hollywood Boulevard marquee: "I Take This Woman—Dust Be My Destiny." . . . But perhaps someone will give her a duster as a wedding present. . . . Writing out of doors involves both mental and physical exertion. One has to think and also to shift his chair to keep in the shade as it creeps across the lawn. Just shifted into the shade of a pomegranate tree. The shade is nice, but pomegranates are annoyances, just globular masses of seeds coated with flavor you cannot taste unless you concentrate mentally on it. . . . Do you know what that longer than usual row of dots signifies? A nap. It is hot and the shade edged me near enough a garden swing to permit me to edge into it without exertion; my purpose was to think up what to write next. But I went to sleep and would have been asleep yet if my spaniel had not found me and jumped up beside me. You know how stupid a sound nap leaves you? Well——

What Late Ones Look Like

Edmund Goulding

Scores In This One

'TIL WE MEET AGAIN, Warner Brothers
Executive producer.....Hal B. Wallis
Associate producer.....David Lewis
Director.....Edmund Goulding
Screen play.....Warren Duff
From an original story by.....Robert Lord
Director of photography.....Tony Gaudio, ASC
Art director.....Robert Haas
Film editor.....Ralph Dawson
Sound.....E. A. Brown
Special effects by.....Byron Haskin, ASC
Gowns by.....Orry-Kelly
Orchestral arrangements by.....Ray Heindorf
Musical director.....Leo F. Forbstein
Cast: Merle Oberon, George Brent, Pat O'Brien, Geraldine Fitzgerald, Binnie Barnes, Frank McHugh, Eric Blore, Henry O'Neill, George Reeves, Frank Wilcox, Doris Lloyd, Marjorie Gateson, Regis Toomey, William Halligan, Victor Kilian, Wade Boteler. Running time, 100 minutes.

SUPERB entertainment; perfection in every detail. In essence a sordid story of a girl, condemned to death by a heart ailment, sharing a romance with a man condemned to death for murder, it comes to us as one of the most beautiful love stories the screen ever told, a tender, touching, sympathetic demonstration of the screen's story-telling power. When the ingredients, as such, have so little to recommend them as popular entertainment, it is the technique displayed in their compounding which we must praise for the brilliant results achieved. This review, I warn you, is to be but a hymn of praise, for never in the fourteen years of picture reviewing is there another picture I can recall as being less provocative of adverse criticism.

Hal Wallis, the truly great producer who heads the Warner production forces, was wise in his choice of those who served under him in putting *One Way Passage* into new clothes and presenting it as *'Til We Meet Again*. The strongly dramatic original story was put by Warren Duff into one of the most brilliantly written screen plays we have had in years, one as noted for what it does not say as for what it says. For instance, we are not told whom the man in the romance murdered or why he murdered him; we are not told who the girl is, what her background is, where her home is. We see the two in Hong Kong meet as strangers; they are fellow passengers on a ship, and we accompany them to a San Francisco dock, and that is the last we see of them. We know he goes to the gallows, that she has but a short time to live.

Expert Cast Assembled

It takes understanding casting and discerning direction to transform such drab material into brilliant entertain-

ment. From the list of players which Associate Producer David Lewis submitted to his chief and to the director, Wallis and Edmund Goulding made wise selections. Certainly ideal casting in the leading feminine role was the engaging and talented Merle Oberon. Her mere presence on the screen always has pleased me; here she gives a performance which raises her to the heights as a great actress. And equally ideal casting in the role opposite her was the choice of George Brent. This always dependable actor gives a sincere, impressive performance which gets its dramatic power from its lack of display of effort to achieve it.

On a par with the characterizations of the two stars were those of the supporting players, chief of whom are Pat O'Brien, Geraldine Fitzgerald, Binnie Barnes, Frank McHugh, Eric Blore. They weave an acting pattern with no weak spot in it. I was glad to see McHugh in a part which has its serious moments. He is an actor whose talents have been wasted in a series of half-wit parts. There are many others who help in telling the story, among them Henry O'Neill, always the capable artist; the talented Doris Lloyd whom we do not see often enough; the gracious Marjorie Gateson; and we get a brief glimpse of the pleasing personality of Regis Toomey, another neglected player.

Goulding's Inspired Direction

Even though the tools be perfect it takes craftsmanship to achieve perfection with them. Edmund Goulding was given everything to work with in the way of screen play, cast and production; they were the tools which made perfection possible, but it was his skill as a director which made it a fact. It is one of the most brilliantly directed pictures of all time. The ship on which the story is told has a large passenger list on its eastward voyage across the Pacific. With masterly regard for background action, Goulding keeps the ship alive, never lets us forget its busyness; when a scene is shot in a cabin and a door leading to the deck is opened, we see strolling passengers, ship's officers, cabin stewards carrying trays, and other routines of life aboard ship.

But it is the naturalness developed in the characterizations which is the director's greatest achievement, the one most responsible for the appeal of the picture. There is no acting in it, no striving for effect—just a group of people living a chapter in their lives, unaware of our prying eyes and listening ears. Duff's good writing provides for our picking them up in their stride, the story opening abruptly and without any explanatory preamble. Just as

abruptly it ends, and right up to the last few hundred feet of film you still are wondering how it will end, still hoping the murderer will escape, marry the girl and live happily ever after. But when the different end comes you agree it is the only logical one; you agree also that you have seen a really great picture.

Anatole Litvak Sits In

During the shooting Director Goulding became ill and Anatole Litvak took command during Goulding's absence. The greatest tribute which can be paid to Litvak's contribution to the picture is the absence of evidence of it. The mood established by Goulding is sustained throughout and without suggesting the influence of another director's presence.

The physical attributes of the production match the worthiness of the spiritual and human elements. The art direction of Robert Haas provided Tony Gaudio with opportunities to gather with his camera many shots of pictorial value to add to the fine portraiture which always distinguishes his photography. A goodly proportion of the visual attractiveness of the picture can be credited to the gowns designed by Orry-Kelly. Film editing by Ralph Dawson, special effects by Byron Haskin, and sound recording by E. A. Brown are other assets of the production.

A demonstration of talkie technique at the peak of its perfection. Above the appreciation of children but a picture for everyone else. Dialogue direction notable. Perhaps too fine for small-town audiences, but certainly a joy to all others. A sure cure for box-office worries.

Nice Little Dance And Musical Film

TWO GIRLS ON BROADWAY, MGM

Producer.....Jack Cummings
Director.....S. Sylvan Simon
Screen play.....Joseph Fields, Jerome Chodorov
Based on a story by.....Edmund Goulding
Musical presentation.....Merrill Pye
Musical director.....Georgie Stoll
Musical arrangements.....Walter Ruick
Dance directors: Bobby Connolly, Eddie Larkin.
Art director.....Cedric Gibbons
Wardrobe by.....Dolly Tree
Director of photography.....George Folsey, ASC
Film editor.....Blanche Sewell
Cast: Lana Turner, Joan Blondell, George Murphy, Kent Taylor, Richard Lane, Wallace Ford, Otto Hahn, Lloyd Corrigan, Don Wilson, Charles Wagonheim. Running time, 70 minutes.

A MEMORY of Broadway Melody taken out of yesterday, dolled up with attire of today, made into a lit-

the picture which will please you in a mild sort of way, but will not excite you. Come to think of it, the fact that it is not as big and glittering as its grandmother is perhaps its chief recommendation. It is a dance-musical film in capsule form, which makes it easy to take. An unusual feature of it is the abruptness of its ending. It stops when you think it is going good, and it takes you a moment to realize that, after all, there is nothing more to be said that you cannot imagine to please yourself.

What the story lacks in originality is compensated for by the high degree of entertainment value put into it by the direction of Sylvan Simon. He keeps it moving, gets good performances from his players without stressing points, and by presenting them as a batch of ordinary humans for whom he enlists our interest and maintains it throughout. The beautiful, but by no means dumb, Lana Turner, the capable Joan Blondell, and the graceful and gracious George Murphy head the abbreviated cast, Kent Taylor, Richard Lane and Wallace Ford being the only others who figure prominently in the story.

Is Visually Attractive

¶ A dance sequence in which Lana and Murphy hold the center of the stage, is the visual masterpiece of the production, the setting being another of Cedric Gibbons's pictorial triumphs. Ten are listed as those responsible for the musical content of the picture, and each is to be commended for his contribution to the agreeableness of the picture. And Jack Cummings, producer, can take a bow for his satisfactory guidance of the whole from script to screen.

The playboy indiscretions of the character played by Kent Taylor may be challenged on the score of their being somewhat too crude when the object of his latest fancy is such a gentle, innocent and appealing girl as young Lana Turner, but no other charge can be brought against the picture for lack of good taste. It should give satisfaction to both young and old.

Eyes Examined AND Glasses Fitted

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Buck Benny's Best Box-Office Booster

BUCK BENNY RIDES AGAIN, Paramount
 Producer-director Mark Sandrich
 Screen play William Morrow, Edmund Beloin
 Based on an adaptation by Zion Myers
 Of a story by Arthur Stringer
 Musical direction—for production: Charles Henderson.
 Incidental music Victor Young
 Songs: Lyrics by Frank Loesser; music by Jimmy McHugh.
 Indian adagio and acrobatic routines by: Merriel Abbott Dancers.
 Other dance numbers staged by LeRoy Prinz
 Director of photography Charles Lang, ASC
 Art directors Hans Dreier, Roland Anderson
 Editor LeRoy Stone
 Second unit director Ben Holmes
 Cast: Jack Benny, Ellen Drew, Eddie Anderson, Andy Devine, Phil Harris, Dennis Day, Virginia Dale, Lillian Cornell, Theresa Harris, Kay Linaker, Ward Bond, Morris Ankrum, Charles Lane, James Burke. Running time, 82 minutes.

THE best Jack Benny picture we have had. Mark Sandrich, a director with a long series of successful pictures to his credit, makes his bow as a producer-director with *Buck Benny Rides Again*, and in both capacities acquits himself brilliantly. He has given us much which is beautiful to look at, much which is entertaining to listen to, much which is amusing to laugh at, and that strikes me as being a complete prescription for a satisfactory screen offering. Nature and Art Directors Hans Dreier and Roland Anderson provided backgrounds of great pictorial beauty against which the lively and amusing story is told briskly under Sandrich's direction. Mark's sense of humor is reflected in every sequence. Charles Lang's photography is another big asset; LeRoy Stone's expert film editing another.

An unusual feature of the production is the fact that Jack Benny, Rochester, Andy Devine, Phil Harris and Dennis Day play themselves, which makes it practically a visual presentation of a Benny broadcast. And when people play themselves the performances must be perfect. No one, for instance, can argue that someone else can play Benny better than Jack can or that his performance lacks the Benny touch.

Built Only to Amuse

¶ The screen play by William Morrow and Edmund Beloin, based on Zion Myers's adaptation of an Arthur Stringer story, is built solely to provoke laughter. A commendable feature of it is the absence of gags dragged in by the heels at the expense of the continuity of our interest in the story as it progresses. It is an exceedingly clever screen play which keeps the various characterizations nicely balanced. Benny is presented as the rather harassed victim of an amusing chain of circumstances which end

in a satisfactory manner when he finally gets the girl as the picture fades out.

Eddie Anderson (Rochester) again just about steals the show. His performance is notable for the manner in which it reveals his intelligent grasp of all its comedy values. And that his feet are as nimble as his brain is revealed in his dance numbers, in one of them teamed with Theresa Harris, an attractive colored girl who scores as an actress, singer and dancer. She is so clever in all three I would not be surprised to learn she also is a good cook. Three capable and charming girls are Ellen Drew (who shares the romance with Benny), Virginia Dale and Lillian Cornell. Their singing is one of the nice features of the picture. Dennis Day contributes one song in a manner to make you sorry he does not sing another. And Carmichael, the bear, must be included in the list of good performers.

This Girl Can Make Good

¶ Music, of course, is a big feature of the production. It is contributed by Charles Henderson and Victor Young, and Frank Loesser and Jimmy McHugh (songs). One of the outstanding song numbers is *Drums In the Night*, sung by Lillian Cornell. I wish some producer would give her an opportunity to make good this prediction: She can be developed into an outstanding screen star. If she gets her chance, you will see this prediction repeated in a year or two under an "I Told You So" heading.

Indian adagio and acrobatic dance routines by the Merriel Abbott Dancers are spectacularly beautiful contributions to the production's commendable features.

For men, women and children; clean, gay, colorful. Delightfully entertaining throughout. Surefire box-office attraction.

Another Good One In Kildare Series

DR. KILDARE'S STRANGE CASE, MGM
 Director Harold S. Bucquet
 Screen play Harry Ruskin, Willis Goldbeck
 Based on an original story by: Max Brand, Willis Goldbeck.
 Musical score David Snell
 Recording director Douglas Shearer
 Art director Cedric Gibbons
 Director of photography John Seitz, ASC
 Film editor Gene Ruggiero
 Cast: Lew Ayres, Lionel Barrymore, Laraine Day, Shepperd Strudwick, Samuel S. Hinds, Emma Dunn, Nat Pendleton, Walter Kingsford, Alma Kruger, John Aldredge, Nell Craig, Marie Blake, Charles Waldron, George Lessey, Tom Collins, George H. Reed, Paul Porcasi, Horace MacMahon, Frank Orth, Margaret Seddon, Fay Helm. Running time, 76 minutes.

EXCELLENT entertainment, distinguished for writing, direction and acting. The series is a striking illustra-

tion of the box-office value of continuity of interest in the same group of characters. *Strange Case* is my selection as the best of the lot so far; you may fancy a previous one, but I doubt it. Each in the series is a truly human document which entertains while it dignifies the practice of medicine. Through all of them runs a sense of humor which in no way impedes the forward progress of the serious aspects of the stories, the dramatic passages and the romantic interludes.

The original story by Max Brand and Willis Goldbeck was made into a smoothly running screen play by Harry Ruskin and Goldbeck. Harold Bucquet put into it the same vigor and sparkle, understanding and sympathy that have distinguished his direction of the whole series. David Snell (musical score), John Seitz (photography), Gene Ruggiero (film editing) also rendered valuable services.

Nothing Left to Say

¶ The continuation of the series makes it difficult to write an original review which will do full justice to the merits of each of them. Several times already I have said about all there is to say about the newest one. The understanding interpretation of his role by Lew Ayres; the brilliance of a Lionel Barrymore performance; the cleverness and appealing beauty of Laraine Day; the agreeable presence of Emma Dunn, Sam Hinds, Nat Pendleton, Walter Kingsford, Alma Kruger, Marie Blake, Charles Waldron and all the rest of them—what can one say of them that already has not been said several times?

A newcomer—unless my memory is faulty—is Shepperd Strudwick, a polished actor with an agreeable personality. John Eldredge, for a long time a favorite of mine, appears in a few sequences and does excellent work in a part around which the plot mainly revolves. For five years a mental case, he is given an insulin shock by daring young Kildare without authorization of the head of the hospital. It is the dramatic high spot of the picture, ably built to and having a stirring climax.

This series too well established to need much comment. All of them are clean, informative, entertaining. Exhibitors will find this one another winner.

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Roach Goes Back To Beginning of Things

ONE MILLION B. C., Hal Roach

Directors.....Hal Roach, Hal Roach, Jr.
Assistant director.....Barnard Carr
Original screen play: Mickell Novak, George Baker, Joseph Frickert.

Descriptive narration.....Grover Jones
Narrator.....Conrad Nagel
Director of photography Norbert Brodine, ASC
Photographic effects by: Roy Seawright; edited by Ray Snyder.

Art director.....Charles D. Hall
Associate art director.....Nicolai Remisoff
Set decorator.....W. L. Stevens
Sound recorder.....William Randall
Wardrobe supervisor.....Harry Black
Musical score.....Werner R. Heymann
Orchestra conductor.....Irving Talbot

Cast: Victor Mature, Carole Landis, Lon Chaney, Jr., Mamo Clark, Nigel De Brulier, Mary Gale Fisher, Edgar Edwards, Inez Palange.

HAL ROACH better be careful! A member of good standing of the Motion Picture Producers' Association, he actually has produced a motion picture. And that is not being done, not since the screen learned how to talk. Of course, it is possible that Hal disagrees with all his fellow members and remembers when it was pleasant for us to lean back in a picture house and watch things happening on the screen, without our having to listen attentively to ceaseless chatter to keep us abreast of what was going on. Anyway, whatever the impulse which stirred him, Hal has given us the only almost hundred per cent true motion picture we have had in a decade, one which tells ninety-five per cent of its story with the camera.

And, believe me, *1,000,000 B. C.* is something to look at. Huge prehistoric, mammoth beasts and reptiles, an awe-inspiring volcanic eruption, a mountain-topping earthquake are numbers on the pictorial program. The producer is careful to tell us in the picture's first sequence, through the medium of Conrad Nagel as a scientist, that what we are about to see is Conrad's own interpretation of ancient hieroglyphics found scratched on the walls of a cave.

Has Social Significance

¶ As a demonstration of technical cinematic possibilities, the production is astonishing. Interwoven with its physical aspects is a coherent story of social significance in that it shows one tribe of uncouth savages coming under the influence of another tribe which displays a consciousness of social graces, the chief manifestation being its habit of eating like human beings instead of like beasts. The more savage tribe also learns something from the other in the way of politeness in the treatment of women.

The haggard roughness of Fire Valley, Nevada, serves as a background for

the action and emphasizes visually the aptness of the picture's title. The direction, too, matches both story and setting, the movement of characters, their mannerisms and methods of communication giving an air of authenticity to the whole. It was a brave undertaking on the part of Producer Roach to give us something so radically different from what we are used to, but he comes through with flying colors, being assisted in directing by his son, Hal, Jr., and having the services of a staff of most capable technicians. Scan the list of credits given above and put a good mark opposite each name. And for a masterly screen play, underscore the names of Mickell Novak, George Baker and Joseph Frickert.

Possibly a little strong for children, but one no others should miss. Artistically a plea for more purely visual film entertainment, and as such a valuable lesson for all students of the screen. Of educational interest in that it records one theory of the birth of civilization. No exhibitor need apologize for having booked it even though it lacks star names.

Drab, Depressing But Is Well Done

JOHNNY APOLLO, Twentieth Century-Fox

Director.....Henry Hathaway
Associate producer.....Harry Joe Brown
Screen play.....Philip Dunne, Rowland Brown
Original story.....Samuel G. Engel, Hal Long
Music and lyrics: Lionel Newman, Frank Loesser, Mack Gordon.

Director of photography...Arthur Miller, ASC
Art directors...Richard Day, Wiard B. Ihnen
Set decorator.....Thomas Little
Film editor.....Robert Bischoff
Musical director.....Cyril J. Mockridge

Cast: Tyrone Power, Dorothy Lamour, Edward Arnold, Lloyd Nolan, Charley Grapevin, Lionel Atwill, Marc Lawrence, Jonathan Hale, Harry Rosenthal, Russell Hicks, Fuzzy Knight, Charles Lane, Selmar Jackson, Charles Trowbridge, John Hamilton, William Pawley, Eric Wilton, Gary Breckner, Harry Tyler, George Irving, Eddie Marr, Anthony Caruso, Stanley Andrews, Wally Albright. Running time, 90 minutes.

ALL right for those who can enjoy good performances purely as such, who can appreciate good direction for its own sake, and the manner in which the story is told without caring what it tells. Others who patronize pictures to see and hear stories being told—and they constitute the big majority of those whose money keeps the film industry in funds—will find *Johnny Apollo* a rather sordid bit of screen entertainment. Edward Arnold, millionaire, plays the father of Tyrone Power, collegian and athlete when we first see him. As the story opens, Arnold is indicted for embezzlement, tried, sent to the penitentiary; Power, discouraged by

failure to land a job because of his father's reputation, changes his name to Johnny Apollo, becomes a crook; the law catches up with him and he, too, lands in the penitentiary.

Evil is all right as a screen story element, but only if it points a moral. If this one does that, it escaped me. I will confess the story failed to hold my close interest and I may have missed any uplifting message if it contained one. However, it is the story's mission to create and hold audience interest, and as far as I was concerned, this one failed to do so, consequently I have no apologies to make for my lack of close attention.

Stops to Take Songs Aboard

❏ Crook dramas depend chiefly for their entertainment quality on the briskness of their forward movement, on a rapid succession of vigorous scenes. This story stops three times to provide Dorothy Lamour with opportunities to sing. She sings well, but should have done it in some other picture. Also she acts her part in a convincing manner. The others in the cast also maintain a high acting standard. Edward Arnold is particularly impressive, giving us one of the most thoughtful and compelling performances of his screen career. Ty Power also gives excellent account of himself, as do Lloyd Nolan and Charley Grapewin. Many others appear in the film in smaller parts and each of them proves capable.

The picture is produced on a comprehensive and visually impressive scale. Henry Hathaway's direction is perfect, realizing fully all the dramatic qualities in the screen play by Philip Dunne and Rowland Brown. The story is an original by Samuel Engel and Hal Long. While you may quarrel with it as I do because of its drabness, you will find no fault with the manner in which it is presented. Art direction, photography, film editing and all other technical attributes were in thoroughly competent hands.

Undiluted crime is not fare for children, even though no fault can be found with the story on the score of its lack of good taste in the telling. Star names and imposing production should give it box-office value and possibly only more critical audiences will find fault with it.

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Just A Baby, But He Steals the Show

FORTY LITTLE MOTHERS, MGM

Director Busby Berkeley
Producer Harry Rapf
Screen play Dorothy Yost, Ernest Pagano
Art director Cedric Gibbons
Associate art director Daniel B. Cathcart
Wardrobe Dolly Tree
Director of photography Charles Lawton, ASC
Film editor Ben Lewis
Lyrics Charles Tobias
Music Nat Simon
Musical direction Georgie Stoll
Musical arrangements Roger Edens
Orchestration George Bassman, Wally Heglin
Cast: Eddie Cantor, Judith Anderson, Rita Johnson, Bonita Granville, Ralph Morgan, Diana Lewis, Nydia Westman, Margaret Early, Martha O'Driscoll, Charlotte Munier, Louise Seidel, Baby Quintanilla. Running time, 87 minutes.

OUR nomination for the Academy Award for the best performance by an actor during 1940: Baby Quintanilla. The Mickey Rooneys, Spencer Tracys, Paul Munis might just as well cease dreaming, even though there is so much of the year still to run. The whole secret of screen acting is revealed in the performance of this eight-months-old youngster: feeling the part and letting the camera do the work. It must have required persistence and diligence to catch all the fleeting expressions of the fascinating baby which are scattered through the length of film, each one adding story value to the scene in which it appears. The baby shots get their value from the impression they give you that Quintanilla, when each was made, was thinking only of the business in hand.

Forty Little Mothers is precisely the kind of picture the world needs now, one as far away in mood from the depressing international occurrences as it is possible to get. It is a healthy, clean, joyous picture, with the performance by the baby to atone for whatever weaknesses it reveals. Eddie Cantor, a bachelor looking for a job, finds himself in possession of the baby by virtue of circumstances over which he has no control, and thereafter plays the foster-father role with feeling and sympathy which make his performance perhaps the most ingratiating of his career.

Worth Price of Admission

❏ Cantor lands a job as professor in a fashionable girl's school into which he smuggles the baby. The animosity with which he is greeted by the students and their efforts to drive him from the school are somewhat overdone and make the story drag. But when the girls discover the baby, things buck up, and when you leave the theatre you will be content that you have had your full money's worth.

While none of the other performances in any way dims the luster of the

baby's, no fault can be found with them on the score of lack of merit. The more prominent roles are in the capable hands of Judith Anderson, Rita Johnson, Bonita Granville, Ralph Morgan, Diana Lewis and Nydia Westman. Harry Rapf provided a handsome production for the picture, Cedric Gibbons continues his habit of designing sets of great artistic value, and Charles Lawton's camera does full justice to their photographic possibilities. Dorothy Yost and Ernest Pagano wrote the screen play, which is based on a story by Jean Guitton. To Busby Berkeley goes unstinted praise for the sympathetic direction which makes the picture so appealing.

One you cannot afford to miss. And by all means take the children. It presents the most remarkable baby seen on the screen in years. If exhibitors get behind it they should find it a profitable attraction. They will feel that Harry Rapf should get an Academy Award for discovering Baby Quintanilla.

Hardly Big Enough For Its Big Star

IRENE, RKO Release

Producer-director Herbert Wilcox
Screen play Alice Duer Miller
From the musical comedy "Irene"
Book by James H. Montgomery
Music and lyrics by: Harry Tierney, Joseph McCarthy.
Director of photography Russell Metty, ASC
Art director L. P. Williams
Gowns Edward Stevenson
Recorder Richard Van Hesse
Special effects Vernon L. Walker, ASC
Assistant directors Syd Fogel, Lloyd Richards
Musical director Anthony Collins
Orchestra arrangements: Anthony Collins, Gene Rose.

Cast: Anna Neagle, Ray Milland, Roland Young, Alan Marshal, May Robson, Billie Burke, Arthur Treacher, Marsha Hunt, Isabel Jewell, Doris Nolan, Stuart Robertson, Ethel Griffies, Tom Kelly, Juliette Compton, Roxanne Barkley. Running time, 93 minutes.

NICE little musical romance in which Anna Neagle fully realizes all the possibilities of the leading role. Her hold on American picture patrons was established by her characterizations of Queen Victoria and Edith Cavell. In pictures sketching the careers of those notable women, the English girl proved herself a really brilliant actress, one to be taken seriously and to be expected to rise to even greater acting heights. She was unusual, in that while still young and beautiful she impressed the world by her characterization, in the case of the British queen, of a woman nearing her eighties. One can sympathize with the urge of youth to play youth, but if such an urge stirred Miss Neagle, I feel it should have been expressed in a vehicle which made greater

and more serious demands upon her as a dramatic actress.

There is nothing lacking in Anna Neagle's *Irene* performance, but her part is one of such definite limits it could have been played satisfactorily by any one of a score of girls who already had been identified with successful romantic-singing-dancing productions. In other words, Miss Neagle stepped out of a field in which few excelled as she had done, and entered one in which many already had proved themselves adequate.

Takes Liberties with Music

¶ The *Irene* story is too frail to support the weight of its length. When the picture nears its already too long delayed ending, it checks its forward progress to permit its star to do a long solo dance to express emotions which could have been expressed in a line of dialogue or a fleeting glance. Another sequence which mars the mood of the production is that in which a succession of singing groups distorts the lilting beauty of the music of *Alice Blue Gown*, a song too well established to make it advisable to subject it to such indignity.

The picture is given a scenically impressive production, one of beauty and sweep, admirably designed by L. P. Williams and artistically photographed by Russell Metty and Vernon Walker. A factor in its visual appeal are the scores of gowns designed by Edward Stevenson. Screen play by Alice Duer Miller is commendable except in its provision for intimate conversations on dance floors, scenes which lose their intimacy, consequently their story value, by delivery of the speeches in tones loud enough to be heard by all the dancers. In all other respects Herbert Wilcox's direction is competent. Performances throughout are excellent. Ray Milland displays more sympathetic understanding of his role than hitherto has characterized his work. I liked him in his first picture, gave him his first favorable mention, but since then he has impressed me as being a superficial player. Roland Young, Alan Marshal, May Robson, Billie Burke, and Marsha Hunt are others to be credited with valuable contributions to *Irene*. I wish some producer would give Marsha a chance to show what she can do.

Rather conventional make-over of an established favorite; characterized by good taste and visual attractiveness. Will not break box-office records, but exhibitors should find its showing profitable.

★ Romance with a capital "R" will glow from the stages of America if Vivien Leigh and Laurence Olivier get together for a projected production of *Romeo and Juliet*, which production would tour the states. However, don't hold your breath. The plans of mice and men—.

Dead Men Multiply In Mystery Yarn

THE SAINT TAKES OVER, RKO

Producer Howard Benedict
Executive producer Lee Marcus
Director Jack Hively
Screen play Lynn Root, Frank Fenton
Musical director Roy Webb
Director of photography Frank Redman, ASC
Gowns Renie
Recorder Earl A. Wolcott
Editor Desmond Marquette
Cast: George Sanders, Wendy Barrie, Jonathan Hale, Paul Guilfoyle, Morgan Conway, Robert Emmett Keane, Cyrus W. Kendall, James Burke, Robert Middlemass, Roland Drew, Nella Walker, Pierre Watkin.

Reviewed by Bert Harlen

OUR clever and suave friend The Saint sleuths again here and in a picture as smooth in story movement and general acting as any of the series. The piece takes its share of what might be termed mystery story license, but it is all interest-sustaining and the incidents seem plausible enough at the time. Emphasis is on humor and the comedy is adroitly handled and efficacious. We are beguiled into taking nothing seriously. Carcasses accumulate throughout the story, but we are not the least dismayed. In fact, when one man, secreted away from his home for safe keeping, is shot through a basement window, we laugh like all get out, and we further chuckle at his stupid, staring expression when being transported homeward in a limousine. If you want to see some of the barbarian in you, here is your chance. It is extraordinary what viewpoints and reactions drama can inveigle us into.

Part of the humor arises out of the circumstance that Jonathan Hale, again Inspector Fernack, now deprived of his badge because of a gangland frame-up, manages to be found in the company of each of the "stiffs" when they are discovered by The Saint, who takes full advantage of the incriminating circumstance to prod the inspector. There is a good quota of amusing lines in the screen play by Lynn Root and Frank Fenton, and especially so are those allotted to Paul Guilfoyle, seen as a dim-witted gangster, coerced into aligning himself with the law. Guilfoyle is very entertaining in the part. He should do comedy more often.

Gone the Lackluster

¶ George Sanders is seen to better advantage here than in any performance of his I have seen for some time, having divested his work of a lackluster quality which has characterized it on occasion in the past. He is at once subtle and animate, points his comedy lines well. Wendy Barrie is very agreeable optically and plays with charm, though it is a little hard to believe that such a charming one could be guilty of such

extensive murder—or is this letting a cat out of the bag? Hardly, I think, since she becomes suspect in an early episode.

Jonathan Hale, as intimated, is deft at reacting to the slings and arrows of The Saint's outrageous wit, fully realizing the comedy possibilities of his role. The adroit handling alluded to was done by Director Jack Hively. The film reflects good production supervision, the newly instated Howard Benedict being production chief, with Lee Marcus as executive producer. Sets are attractive or atmospheric, photography by Frank Redman is an attribute, and editing by Desmond Marquette is adept. Musical background by Roy Webb is suitably gittery, too.

Another of the Saint series, this one boasts a good deal of successful humor and considerable finesse in the playing and direction. The yarn holds the interest. Not for very young children, because of the accumulation of murders, despite that the deceased are crooks and a whimsical view is taken of their passing.

Has Prize Fight, Song and Dance

GRANDPA GOES TO TOWN, Republic

Associate producer-director Gus Meins
Original screen play Jack Townley
Photographer Reggie Lanning
Film editor Lester Orlebeck
Art director John Victor Mackay
Musical director Cy Feuer
Wardrobe Adele Palmer
Cast: James Gleason, Lucile Gleason, Russell Gleason, Harry Davenport, Lois Ranson, Tommy Ryan, Maxie Rosenbloom, Ledda Godoy, Noah Beery, Douglas Meins, Garry Owen, Ray Turner, Lee "Lasses" White, Walter Miller, Emmett Lynn, Joe Cairns, Arturo Godoy. Running time, 65 minutes.

Reviewed by Bert Harlen

EVIDENTLY there is an established market for these Higgins Family offerings, and in as much as enough people are being entertained to make the films profitable, the Republic people probably will not consider critical reaction very relevant. And I am not too sure that it is, except for those readers whose response is likely to concur with that of the critic's, and these persons probably know already what the Higgins series is like. It is possible, though, that the appeal of the series could be widened and that even further elation could be evoked from those who have laid down their quarters for Higgins diversion and come back for more.

The present picture, *Grandpa Goes to Town*, is a better film than the last one I saw of the series. It has been given considerable production elaboration, including several turns of song and dance and a demonstration fistic bout

between the South American champion, Arturo Godoy, and our own Maxie Rosenbloom. Seems to me, though, as I observed before, there is something incongruous in the handling of the story material, in that emphasis is so preponderantly on farcical predicaments and gags, and so little endeavor is made to develop the human interest element one expects in a family picture. No discernible affection or sympathy passes among the Higgins clan; they take one another pretty much for granted. The mother is an inordinately dumb woman, the father spends much of his time in a slow burn. Their *raison d'être* seems to be to get into involvements.

Anything Can Happen

Be prepared to see a picture in which plausibility is valued at about two figs. Predicaments and gags will be your chief reward. Personally I found the opening portion, especially the incident in which the inordinately dumb mother buys a hotel without even consulting her husband, a little too far-fetched to swallow. The hotel is a dilapidated thing in a western "ghost town," but the elder son overhears two prospectors jubilantly proclaiming the discovery of gold—he could not possibly have perceived they were actors performing before a camera—and with equal jubilation spreads the news, with the result that the town has a boom. Gangsters feature and there are sundry complications.

The middle portion of the picture is simpler of design and affords pretty good entertainment, what with the vocal, terpsichorean, and fistic presentiments. Godoy and his attractive wife also have some lines in the picture. The somewhat rearranged features of the former take the cinema lights in such a way as to make him passable for the ghost in *Hamlet*. And speaking of countenances, Rosenbloom with a pie in the puss is another sight extraordinary. Lois Ranson stands out in the cast as an unusually versatile and talented miss, being accomplished at both singing and dancing, as well as being competent in her part. Douglas Meins handles his singing spots agreeably. The Gleasons are efficient, and as much can be said for Harry Davenport and Tommy Ryan. It was good to see Noah Beery again, whose rugged features are strongly expressive cinematically. Direction is adequate, the mounting satisfactory.

Higgins family fans will doubtless find this much to their liking, as it is comparatively one of the better films of the series. Exacting patrons, however, will probably balk at the flagrant implausibilities of the story. The middle portion of the film is fairly entertaining, affording song and dance num-

bers and a prize fight. Presence in the story of Arturo Godoy may cut ice with some patrons. Suitable for the children.

Ambitious Orphan Leads Hard Life

TOMBOY, Monogram

Producer Scott R. Dunlap
Director Robert McGowan
Original story and screen play: Marion Orth, Dorothy Reid.
Director of photography Harry Neumann, ASC
Technical director E. R. Hickson
Film editor Russell Schoengarth
Musical director Edward Kay
Cast: Marcia Mae Jones, Jackie Moran, Charlotte Wynters, Grant Withers, George Cleveland, Clara Blandick, Marvin Stephens. Running time, 70 minutes.

Reviewed by Bert Harlen

A TEARFUL tale comes from Monogram in this drama of an orphan farm lad reaching for the light but impeded and harassed by a very un-understanding uncle. The uncle is one of the meanest white men you will have seen, works the boy hard, yet calls him worthless, beats him on the least provocation, and even makes him quit school, one of his few delights, because it interferes with his tasks on the farm. The gall of disappointment is given us in large measure when the youngster, having looked forward for days to attending a basket social and chopped wood at nights for a neighbor to earn seventy-five cents, is cursorily refused permission to go at the last minute. The oppression and travail become hard for human flesh to bear at times—our flesh.

A generous scoop of dramatic peppermints is provided at the end of the bitter repast, however. The boy having fought a couple of thieving tramps, uncle suddenly perceives his true worth, pats him on the back, and offers to treat him like a son henceforth. Not all the previous proceedings are ill-flavored, moreover. There is a spicing of humor here and there and some tender morsels of budding young love. I suppose *Tomboy* comes under the classification of naive entertainment. Technically it is not badly done. The playing in spots is rather good. The rural, homespun quality at times is refreshing, and the directness and simplicity of the story exert an appeal. Yet the piece tends to be heavy-handed in its appeal to our emotions, and character delineation by and large is hardly searching.

Many May Like It

Now, this may not matter a tittle to small town audiences. In fact, these gross aspects of the picture may be in its favor with such assemblages. The picture may clean up in some quarters. The hearty farm folk who flock into Bethany, Missouri, every Saturday night

possibly will relish a snoring weep and welcome the catharsis of a livid outrage at the uncle's un-understanding. My reviewing naturally aims to set forth the probable reaction of most *Spectator* readers.

Young Jackie Moran is a likeable lad, and numerous of his scenes, both of a heavy and light sort, are effective. His best playing is that done in a simple way. It seems to me his work would benefit by dropping the stock juvenile mannerisms in which he indulges now and then. Marcia Mae Jones characterizes vigorously as the tomboy daughter of a retired baseball player, newcomers to the rural section. I hear tell the Monogram people plan to film some further Jones-Moran features. The youngsters team well. Charlotte Wynters, Grant Withers, George Cleveland, Clara Blandick, and Marvin Stephens are competent, and young Buddy Pepper effervesces briefly. Direction by Robert McGowan is workmanlike. Once or twice he could have watched more closely the consistency in the emotional state of a character between one shot and the next. Cinematographer Harry Neumann has provided some attractive rustic shots. Monogram musical backgrounds are improving, musical director here being Edward Kay. The screen play was by Marion Orth and Dorothy Reid.

Rather heavy-handed in enlisting our sympathy for a central figure, an orphan lad. Characterizations are not very subtle. Discriminating patrons would consider it naive fare. Small-townners—including those who live in cities—may think it great stuff. Very suitable for children.

★ Two productions are being considered by the new Frank Capra-Robert Riskin independent production unit following completion of *The Life of John Doe*, which undertaking is expected to reach the shooting stage sometime soon. Choice of their ensuing enterprise will lie between *Don Quixote* and *The Life of William Shakespeare*. This latter idea, given the Capra-Riskin treatment, should make a fascinating film.

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(at Hollywood Blvd.)
HEmpstead 1969

This Hollywood

MANY REMAKES ARE SCHEDULED

TWICE told tales—and some thrice told ones—will abound in the filmic output of the 1940-41 season. The past season has seen an increase of these remakes, some exploited as such and others released with new titles and trimmings, but during coming months the picture patron forgetful of his titles—or deluded by new ones—will be scratching his head even more frequently than heretofore, trying to recall just when and where he has previously encountered characters and situations. Among the stories announced for production are *Mark of Zorro*, *The Way of All Flesh*, *The Desert Song*, *Dulcy*, *The Patent Leather Kid*, *Down to the Sea in Ships*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and there are a legion of others.

A few of these stories, especially those done in the silent picture era, are not only strong fiction, but possess possibilities for further development sufficient to warrant their again being brought to the screen. The musical pieces will at least afford some tuneful vocalizing and perhaps a bit of dancing. By and large, however, there is no justification or excuse for the rehashing of these stories. Most of the yarns have either already been done as well as they can be or, ordinary fictional stuff to begin with, have been worn threadbare by repetitions in motion pictures, dramatic stock, and radio.

It Seems But Yesterday

¶ Who under heaven, for instance, wants to see *Dulcy* again? *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, though a fine story, was given such an outstanding production, and this such a short time ago, that the memory of it must be vivid in the minds of all who saw it. Personally, I can recall individual scenes between Fredric March and Miriam Hopkins. What these remakes do is to convert the screen from a creative and imaginative medium into a sort of stock company. The mass of these stories will only further disappoint or weary the public. They have an insidiously bad effect on picture-goers, too, in that they convey the impression that the film industry is reaching the end of its rope, so to speak, as far as having anything new to say is concerned. Which, of course, is far from the truth.

That a dearth of story material exists, however, is apparently the firm belief of some film executives. Economy could not be a real motive behind the deluge of remakes. Original material could be bought for what will be paid to screen writers for revamping most of the scripts with new dialogue and situations. The story as a rule is a com-

paratively small part of production cost, anyway.

There Is No Story Shortage

¶ What is really lacking is not potential story material but the discernment to see the potentiality of material available. Both studio reading departments and the executives need to reorder and clarify the standards by which they judge the suitability of stories. Few of the outstanding successes of recent years which were adapted from plays or novels would have gotten past the first reader as an original script. Would *Grapes of Wrath*? Or *Gone With the Wind*? Or *Stage Door*? These stories were filmed only because the public had already evinced a strong interest in them. But a wide range of suitable screen material not the current rage is available.

Aside from original scripts, the writing of which has never been fostered by the studios as it should have been, there are overlooked possibilities among the classics, as well as among current novels and short stories. Moreover, there is a wealth of material reposing in dusty drawers at the studios, scripts from the earlier silent picture days. Off hand I can call to mind four obscure stories from the period of the early twenties that would make capital talking pictures. A recital of them will be forthcoming upon receipt of a penny postcard.

* * *

WANTED—A "BEEG" WOMAN

GEORGE O'BRIEN, back from a 25,000-mile tour of South America via airplane, reports the Latins find our screen heroines insufficient, not in histrionic talent, mind you, but in bulk. As quoted in the *New York Times* the actor says, "The natives scorn Hollywood women as too frail. It's having a real effect in increasing the popularity of Argentine-made pictures, which are replacing the Hollywood product. An exhibitor in La Paz, Bolivia, said sneeringly but earnestly about the feminine lead in one of my recent films: 'You are a beeg man, Meester O'Brien. You need a beeg woman.'"

* * *

DALTONS WILL RIDE AGAIN

COME May, the Universal people will start their cameras grinding on *When the Daltons Rode*, which, of course, will be an enactment of that dramatic raid of the daring Dalton gang on the financial reserves of Coffeyville, Kansas, the five men holding up two banks at once. The picturization will be of particular interest to me, not only because the account of the exciting raid was al-

BY
BERT HARLEN

ternated with *Mother Goose* and *Little Red Riding Hood*—at my own insistence, I must admit—when a youngster, but also because it was in Coffeyville that this Harlen person first saw the light of day.

The tale has now become a legend in those parts, one which survives with especial vividness in my family, since nearly all of them, in one way or another, were involved in the event. Mater, then a child, saw the outlaws riding into town, five abreast, at an unhurried, steady trot. In the great gun fracas that ensued—the town had been warned that the notorious Daltons were coming and was prepared for them—grandfather saw the man beside him keel over, and, loosing his head, ran into a livery stable and hid his watch in a stack of hay. Two aunts, out buggy riding, heard the Daltons were in town and, for protection, followed a man ahead of them on horseback. The man was the wounded Emmett, only one of the three brothers to escape with his life.

Later the family en masse saw the other men stretched out with their boots off, grandfather possibly thinking that the spectacle would be an object lesson. Emmett, incidentally, then only 19, not only reformed but became something of a reformer. It is on his autobiography that the Universal film will be based.

* * *

AN ITEM ON ODORS

ON HIS amusing radio program *Ho Hum*, during which he reads items from his "snoozepaper," George Applegate informed us the other evening that an inventor in Europe has perfected a device that adds the stimulus of scent to screen fare. If a garden scene is pictured, the spectator is favored with the fragrant aroma of flowers. If the locale is a hospital, the drama is heightened by the pungency of ether. But really, Mr. Applegate, was that crack very nice about many pictures not needing the gentleman's scent invention?

★ Kansas City audiences have got out of hand in their revolt against boring "supporting" features. It has become a fad to mock and jeer throughout their running. Villains are uproariously applauded, the more mirthful-minded spectators arise and shout quips at the performers. More fun—except for the exhibitor.

★ *Spectator* advertising attracts a maximum of attention from people who really count. Its pages are read, not merely skimmed. Its readers comprise the most constructive minds in the industry.

The Listening Post

BY
HOWARD WALTER FISK

(This is the fourth of a series of analytical reviews of programs originating in Hollywood.)

FROM a chummy dinner to a chiller-diller is quite a jump for a radio author to make, but Carleton Morse does it each week with practically no effort at all. Therefore, this issue's review will consider *One Man's Family* and *I Love a Mystery* more or less as a single offering. In the first place, the same man writes both. In the second place, virtually the same cast enacts them. For instance, Paul, Nickie and Jack of the Tribe of Barbour turn up as Packard, Reggie and Doc in the you-kill-me-or-I'll-kill-you series. In a lesser degree Claudia, Hazel, Betty, et al. of the Barbour female contingent, stand by to fill the girl-to-be-saved roles when the Three Comrades need an incentive to do deeds of valour.

The fact that both shows carry many of the same people has, to a great degree, lessened my interest in them. For five or six years several millions of us became good friends of the Barbours. We laughed with them, we exulted with them, we worried with them. Several times it just happened that something got in my eye, and I called for a very large hankie, when some of the more tragic events descended upon them.

New Voices and Old

¶ At any rate, I have never been able to accept the Three Comrades as being other than the Barbour boys playing cops and robbers. I have never made inquiry as to why Morse put the Barbours into the chill show, but he made me mad when he did it. One reason I was irked is as stated above—I cannot and will not believe the said comrades are the real McCoy. Another is that Morse, who has a genius for casting radio roles—and in evidence I submit the priceless antique dealer in the current Morse mystery—could have (and should have) spread the work around. If by now the readers of this column do not know that I have a great antipathy for too many shows having too many of the same people on them, this is just as good a time to find it out as any. Radio's greatest asset, as far as its talent appeal is concerned, is voices.

When the same people appear on show after show—no matter how good they may be—it gets a little tiresome. Sort of like having ham and beans at every meal. Morse could have found in the great wealth of radio talent in Hollywood, actors who could do the job as well as those now doing it. Furthermore, it would have saved me much confusion. As it is I have to think

COMMENTS ON SOME HOLLYWOOD PROGRAMS

PASSING PARADE—Mon., 8 p.m., KECA. Here is the one-man show which tops all one-man shows. John Nesbitt's style is different, his material engrossing, his admirers legions. Formerly on KHJ, Nesbitt has been on and off the air many times, but like the India rubber man he bounces back higher and higher.

BURNS AND ALLEN—Wed., 7:30 p.m., KNX. This program will be the subject of the analytical review in next issue. Some folks swear by this team, others swear at them. I happen not to like it and will try to tell why.

I WAS THERE—Sun., 7 p.m., KNX. Here is a program with a swell idea behind it. It has always impressed me that the show is being handled somewhat like a stepchild. With proper grooming, not so obvious writing and more production care it could go from a "for free" spot to a sponsor of money and merit—with emphasis on both money and merit.

FLETCHER WILEY—Mon., through Fri., 10:30 a.m., KNX. The "chief of staff" of the Housewives' Protective League woke up with an idea one morning, several years ago, and ran the idea from a few miles of wordy workout once a week to a cross country jaunt. He goes coast-to-coast now. He breaks all recognized rules of radio delivery, jumps from subject to subject like a newscaster who dropped his

copy and is reading while picking up the sheets. But he has a large local following and his material always has something which provokes thought. May his national success also be gratifying to him and his sponsors.

I WANT A DIVORCE—Sun., 8:30 p.m., KFI. This show has two of the most capable men in Hollywood radio as its helmsmen. Van Fleming writes the air adaptations of big name stories, and succeeds in avoiding a "pulp fiction" atmosphere. Van is sincere in his work. William Lawrence directs it, and for my money Bill is one of the most sympathetic producers in the business. Given a sponsor who would pay the bills and give him a free hand, Bill could make most any of them sit up and take notice. The casts of *I Want a Divorce* are uniformly good. I have always thought the idea behind the show smelled just a bit.

TUNE UP TIME—KNX. Andre Kostelanetz and his music, Tony Martin as soloist. There just isn't any better combination for an enjoyable show. The Firestone program is similar in its set-up but it lacks the color and personality which Kostelanetz gets into his program. One cannot compare Richard Crooks and Tony Martin because they are different in their vocal styles. Suffice it to say that Tony is more important in his field than Crooks is in his.

Daylight Saving Time is now in effect in many cities from which your favorite programs originate, thus many Hollywood programs have been shifted. Check with your newspaper for correct times on programs not mentioned here.

twice to remember whether it is time for my Tenderleaf Tea or Fleischman's High Vitamin Yeast three times daily.

Hokum and Hacks

¶ In the face of considerable adverse opinion from radio writers and that small portion of the listening public with whom I come in contact, I hereby proclaim it is my belief that Carleton Morse writes the best radio heard on the air today. True, he is very wordy. True, *One Man's Family* has little or no plot (as plots go in Hollywood). True, *I Love a Mystery* is hokum with a capital hoke. Likewise, it is true that in the tidal wave of words which he pours out each week is the soundest psychology underlying anything on the air. It is also true that your life and mine are not built on the lines of a predetermined story idea in a magazine. That is why the Barbours are so well liked by millions. Again it is true that the listener will accept a lot of hokum if he is led to believe the characters could be real people.

Now, of course, Morse is in a most enviable position—a position which he

created by virtue of his talents—in that he is responsible to no one for what he writes or how he produces it. His sponsors have confidence in his excellent taste, in his desire to give his public radio drama that is, even in his blood and thunder, deeply colored with the tones of semi-classical music. Were all sponsors as broad-minded there might be more fine radio writers instead of the vast number of hacks that radio is developing. These writers do not want to be hacks. They want to write what is popularly termed "good stuff." I do not say highbrow stuff; I say good stuff.

No "Slick" Field

¶ Radio has yet to develop a "slick" field. The greater portion of its writing is "pulp." When a writer gets a "slick" idea and develops it to where it should have full color illustrations, the producer, sponsor (or heaven knows who) will yell, "The public won't like it"; and the net result is a good writing job run through a deglossing process and coming out with bad pen and ink sketches to dress up a story that has been re-written "down" to a moron's I. Q. It makes it most discour-

aging. Morse, however, has no such problem.

In answer to those who believe that the public is an ignorant herd who prefer tripe to Tenderleaf Tea, I submit as an added exhibit, this laboratory test: The next time Morse has Paul Barbour read a lengthy excerpt from a current book, even if it happens already to be a best seller, just check with your weekly book review pages, from coast to coast, and see what happens. If you listen carefully and quietly you will be able to hear the book's publisher offering this addendum to his nightly prayer, "And God bless Carleton for mentioning my book." I have made that observation several times. When, if and as I complete my great American novel—on which I have been meditating for fifteen years or more—one of its most important passages will be written just in the hope that Paul Barbour will use it. Of course, there would be no mercenary thought in connection with such a plan. No—not a bit of it. I merely want Paul to think the passage worthy of public reading, and if that sells ten thousand additional copies—well, can I prevent it? Would I if I could?

* * *

WHAT? NO ADMISSIONS?

WILLIAM CARSON, of North Hollywood, writes: "Aren't you being sort of like a little tin god, telling people what is good and what is not good in radio? You don't pay to hear the shows, you get free tickets to broadcasts, if you want them, and yet you seem to think that you should review a radio program as though you had planked down \$4.40 for an orchestra seat (if you have \$4.40)."

Let us take up his items in reverse order. Number one: I do not have the four-forty. Number two: Radio is a new form of art and entertainment combined, just as pictures, the stage, concerts, books and other cultural and semi-cultural endeavors are arts. All are indulged in for profit and for pleasure. That being true, radio should be handled in this journal as such. Radio is out of its short pants. It has grown up. Too fast, perhaps, and too erratically; nevertheless, it deserves adult consideration, sincere and intelligent handling, and constructive criticism. With my best efforts, I am trying to give it the latter.

Who Pays for Radio?

¶ As to Mr. Carson's third point, I do pay admission to radio shows. Each time I buy any product advertised on the radio, I pay a certain proportion of its cost to me as advertising. Take Blank-Blank coffee, for instance. We use two pounds weekly, 104 pounds per year. Two cents per pound is

charged to advertising on the radio. That is my admission to Blank-Blank's radio program. But, you say, you get a program a week for two cents for your whole family. That is true.

On the other hand think of the hundreds and hundreds of other radio advertised products I buy, the programs of which I never hear. I pay for those programs, too, but do not avail myself of them. They are there, just as Helen Hayes is at the theatre, or Clark Gable at the neighborhood movie. I do not have to go, unless I choose. I do not have to listen unless I want to. But—whether I listen or not—I pay. That fact gives me the right to be an arm chair critic of any program, large or small, and of airing my criticism via the *Spectator*, just as critics of other arts make a living giving their views.

One more point: It is quite true that if it were not for radio, and other forms of advertising, the products I buy would be less universally used and would cost more than they do under mass production methods. In which case, it is questionable whether I would buy as much of them as I do. So, do not come back with the argument that the savings I make because of wide use of products destroys my above contention. You know—and you, and you, and you—that mass production, newspaper and radio advertising, bulk distribution and other merchandising methods make for greater gross profits, even though the per package cost is less. Who pays for radio? Who pays the hidden taxes? I do, and you, and you, and you—

* * *

ODDS AND ENDS

Have you ever noticed that Mel Ruick of *Lux Radio Theatre* often sounds so much like C. B. DeM., that it is hard to tell them apart, and that Earnest Chappell on *Campbell Playhouse* sounds like—you know who? I would mention who "Who" is, but he has been in this column so frequently I have been accused of being subsidized by him.

* * *

When Benny Rubin was doing his *Yankee Doodle* laugh as m.c. at Grauman's Egyptian, he was one of my favorites. He still is, and a more versatile character delineator cannot be found for radio. His *Refugee* on the Lum 'n' Abner benefit was top flight reading.

* * *

Quite often I find myself wanting to hear *The White Fires of Inspiration* which KNX used to put on. Jon Slott wrote it, Ralph Scott produced, and *White Fires* was among the best programs ever to come out of Hollywood. Obviously, the program was unsponsored, because—for some unknown

reason—the best programs always are unsponsored, unless they have a comedian, a dummy, or a torch singer on them, or all three.

* * *

Honestly, I am amazed at the reception which this department has received at the hands of those who are in or on the fringe of radio. Naturally, those are the people it is written for—not for the average reader. If said average reader gets pleasure, so much the better. Some of those who have expressed opinions have quite openly stated that they thought this was a terrible column. Some have said they thought it was quite good. Opinion, to date, is about two to one in favor of the latter.

* * *

John Fee has, for quite some time, urged that Mark Hellinger's short stories would make the basis of a good program. I hope the new *Old Gold* show will reward John with frequent roles in the Hellinger dramatizations. He is a good, experienced, intelligent actor.

* * *

To M. A.: You are wrong. I do not dislike John Conte. On the contrary, along with hundreds of other radio and semi-radio people, I think he is one of the grandest persons in the business. I just think he is heard on too many programs for his own good.

* * *

Leith Stevens, musical director for *Big Town*, has been given the baton to direct the *Ford Summer Hour*. Stevens is one of radio's finest conductors, sponsored or for fun.

* * *

Congratulations to Irving Parker for good sense in handling his clients' publicity. His copy is always welcome on this desk.

★ Another famous American legend will reach the screen with the filming of Washington Irving's *Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, announced for production by Edward Small.

HOLLYWOOD DOG TRAINING SCHOOL



CARL SPITZ, *Owner*

FRITZ BACHE, *Manager*

Phone 12350 Riverside Drive
North Holly. 1262 No. Hollywood, Calif.

Books and Films

BY
INA ROBERTS

The "Shun" Out of Education

¶ One of the good things about book-film cooperation is that, for busy people, it can "take the shun out of education." Seeing films keeps one in touch with an important phase of current events; reading books connecting with films not only does this; it also adds, without effort, to education, to a knowledge of the past. It adds to background; it can also provide a background where none was before. Now a background is not necessarily highbrow; it is merely a rich accumulation of bits of information that serve to illumine one's reading. Who will deny that allusions add greatly to the delight of books. I well remember, when typing parts for the Hecht-MacArthur play, *The Front Page*, coming across the following description of a character's manner in a certain crisis: "with the air of a man carrying a message to Garcia."

Parents should be especially grateful to films for their inspiration to young people toward good reading. What boy, for instance, having seen *Young Tom Edison*, could fail to enjoy the subsequent reading of *The Boy's Life of Edison*, by Meadowcroft; *Edison: His Life, Work and Genius*, by Simmonds; *48 Million Horses*, by Neill, and *How They Blazed the Way*, by McSpadden?

No parent should miss reading *My Son, My Son!*, the novel by Spring nor the film made from it. Its lesson to parents is poignant, compelling. Connecting books are *Sorrell and Son*, by Deeping; *Fortitude*, by Walpole; *State Fair*, by Stong; *The Golden Cord*, by Deeping; *So Big*, by Ferber; *Father and Son*, by McEvoy, and *Getting Ready to be a Father*, by Corbin. You will be a better parent for having read these books and perhaps be spared, in later years, an anguish of regret.

Florian offers a wealth of connecting books to those who love horses or ballet, in addition to its historical appeal. There is the book from which the film was made, *Florian*, by Salten; also Salten's other books. There is that old favorite, *Black Beauty*, by Sewell, for which a new generation is always ready; there are *Animal Heroes*, by Seton; *Ben the Battle Horse*, by Dyer; *The Sorrel Stallion*, by Grew, and for the children from six to eight years, *Blaze and the Forest Fire*, by Anderson. The ballet angle of the film suggests many books, of which I will mention one—*Footnotes to the Ballet*, assembled by Caryl Brahms.

I am indebted to Miss Jean Sexton, of the Cleveland Public Library, for

the following suggested reading in connection with *Northwest Passage*: *Northwest Passage*, by Roberts; *The Black Hunter* and *The Plains of Abraham*, by Curwood; *Next to Valour*, by Jennings; *Black Forest* (Minnigerode), *The Cold Journey* (Stone), *Journal of Robert Rogers* (reprinted from Bulletin of the New York Public Library), and *The Red Road*, by Pendexter.

Travel Via Feature Film

¶ Nowadays you may see in feature films reproductions of a lot of famous spots here and there.

For *Pride and Prejudice*, many scenes were filmed in the famous \$1,000,000 Busch Gardens in Pasadena.

In *Personal History*, retitled *Foreign Correspondent*, you may view a reproduction of the train sheds of London's Waterloo railway station with, for good measure, 500 players dressed in English summer clothes.

CURRENT FILMS

And It All Came True—Story by Louis Bromfield; George Raft, Ann Sheridan, Humphrey Bogart, Jeffrey Lynn. Warner
Angel from Texas—Comedy; Eddie Albert, Ronald Reagan. Warner
The Bluebird—Play by Maurice Maeterlinck; technicolor; Shirley Temple; released 3-22. 20th-Fox
Dark Command—Novel by W. R. Burnett; Walter Pidgeon, Claire Trevor, John Wayne. Repub.
French Without Tears—Play by Terrence Rattigan; released 4-1. Para.
Florian—Novel by Felix Salten; Robert Young. MGM
Forty Little Mothers—Novel by Edward Fadiman; Eddie Canton, Rita Johnson, Bonita Granville. MGM
Gone With the Wind—Novel by Margaret Mitchell; Leslie Howard, Vivien Leigh, Clark Gable, Olivia de Havilland. MGM
Grapes of Wrath—Novel by John Steinbeck; Henry Fonda, Jane Darwell, Doris Bondon, Zeffie Tilbury, Charlie Grapewin; released 2-2. 20th-Fox
House of the Seven Gables—Novel by Nathaniel Hawthorne. Univ.
I Married Adventure—Filmed in Africa; Mrs. Osa Martin; released 1-27. Col.
Irene—Musical comedy hit; screen play by Alice Duer Miller; Anna Neagle, Ray Milland; released 4-5. RKO
My Son, My Son!—Novel by Howard Spring; Brian Aherne, Louise Hayward; released 3-22. U.A.
Northwest Passage—Novel by Kenneth Roberts; Spencer Tracy, Wallace Beery, Robert Taylor. MGM
Pinocchio—Juvenile by C. Collodi; feature cartoon; Walt Disney. RKO
Primrose Path—Based on novel, *February Hill*, by Victoria Lincoln; Ginger Rogers, Joel McCrea; released 3-23. RKO
Too Many Husbands—Play by Somerset Maugham; Melvyn Douglas, Jean Austin. Col.
Virginia City—Technicolor; Errol Flynn, Brenda Marshall, Frank McHugh. Warner

We Shall Meet Again—George Brent, Merle Oberon, Gene Lockhart. Warner
Young Tom Edison—Mickey Rooney, Virginia Weidler, Victor Killian. MGM

COMING FILMS

Abe Lincoln in Illinois—Play by Robert Sherwood; Raymond Massey, Gene Lockhart. RKO
Alias the Deacon—Bob Burns, Peggy Moran. Univ.
And So Goodbye—Story by Mildred Cram and Adele Commandini; Jean Parker, Chas. Winninger, Harry Carey, C. Aubrey Smith, Maria Ouspenskaya. RKO
Andy Hardy Meets a Debutant—Hardy Family. MGM
Ann of Windy Poplars—Girls' story by L. M. Montgomery. RKO
Bill of Divorcement—Play by Clemence Dane; Maureen O'Hara, Adolphe Menjou, Fay Bainter. RKO
Edison the Man—Spencer Tracy. MGM
The Ghost Breaker—Play by Paul Dickey and Chas. Stoddard; Bob Hope, Paullette Goddard. Para.
Pride and Prejudice—Novel by Jane Austen; Greer Garson, Laurence Olivier, Maureen O'Sullivan, Heather Angel, Ann Rutherford. MGM
Safari—Madeleine Carroll, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.; released 6-14.
Story of Lillian Russell—Alice Faye, Edward Arnold, Weber and Fields, Eddie Foy, Jr. 20th-Fox
Susan and God—Play by Rachael Crothers; Fredric March, Joan Crawford, Virginia Weidler. MGM
Those Were the Days—Formerly *At Good Old Siwash*; novel by George Fitch. Para.
Turnabout—Novel by Thorne Smith. U.A.
Twenty Mule Team—Locale, Death Valley; California borax mines; Wallace Beery, Leo Carrillo, Noah Beery, Jr. MGM
Waterloo Bridge—Play by Robert Sherwood; Vivien Leigh, Robert Taylor, Maria Ouspenskaya, Virginia Field. MGM
Way of All Flesh—Novel by Samuel Butler; Fritz Leiber, Muriel Angeles, Bertton Churchill; released 5-31. Para.



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PRODUCTION

All This and Heaven Too—Novel by Rachael Field; Bette Davis. Warner
Arizona—Novel by C. B. Kelland; technicolor. Col.
Boom Town—Famous Panhandle oil discovery, Texas; Spencer Tracy, Clark Gable, Hedy Lamarr. MGM
Brigham Young—Based on *Children of God*, by Vardis Fisher; screen play by Louis Bromfield; Tyrone Power, Linda Darnell. 20th-Fox
Busman's Honeymoon—Novel by Dorothy Sayers; filming in England; Robert Montgomery. MGM
Destiny—Story by Hecht and MacArthur; Basil Rathbone, John Howard. Para.
Foreign Correspondent—Formerly *Personal History*; based on book by Vincent Sheean; Joel McCrea, Laraine Day. U.A.
Life of Knute Rockne—Pat O'Brien, Ronald Reagan. Warner
Long Voyage Home—Play by Eugene O'Neill; John Wayne, Thomas Mitchell. U.A.
Lucky Partners—Based on play *Bonne Chance*, by Sacha Guitry. RKO
Maryland—Early days; Brenda Joyce, Walter Brennan, Fay Bainter; Technicolor. 20th-Fox
Maryland—Semi-historical; early days; Brenda Joyce, Walter Brennan; technicolor. 20th-Fox
Mortal Storm—Novel by Phyllis Bottome; Nazi Germany; Margaret Sullivan, James Stewart, Frank Morgan, Robert Young, Judith Anderson, Bonita Granville. MGM
Northwest Mounted Police—Gary Cooper, Madeleine Carroll. Para.

Old Lady 31—Play by Beulah Bondi; Charles Coburn. MGM
On Their Own—Jones Family. 20th-Fox
One of the Boston Bullertons—Features celebration of Puritans' Founders' Day; Nancy Kelly, Robert Cummings. Univ.
Our Town—Pulitzer Prize play by Thornton Wilder; Thomas Mitchell, Fay Bainter. U.A.
Sea Hawk—Novel by Sabatini; Errol Flynn. Warner
South of Pago Pago—Jon Hall, Frances Farmer, Gene Lockhart. U.A.
Strike Up the Band—Judy Garland, Mickey Rooney. MGM
Tom Brown's School Days—Story by Thos. Hughes; Sir Cedric Hardwick, Freddie Bartholomew. RKO
To Own the World—Financial struggle of young couple to maintain home; Lew Ayres, Lana Turner. MGM
Torrid Zone—Banana industry in South America; George Raft, Ann Sheridan. Warner
Young People—Shirley Temple. 20th-Fox

★ ★ ★

★ A star of yesteryear will shine again when Bing Crosby's new film, *If I Had My Way*, is placed on view, the erstwhile star, Blanche Ring, toast of two continents shortly after the turn of the century. She will do two song numbers, one of which will be *Rings On My Fingers and Bells On My Toes* which she made famous and which is still a prominent tune in our musical lore.

★ Most remakes these days are heavily embroidered with new story material, but Warner Brothers has scheduled a remake in which practically everything will be new but the title—*Disraeli*. The present picture will deal with an earlier period of the statesman's life than was dealt with in the George Arliss film of a few years back, which, it will be recalled, did exceedingly well at the box-office.

▼ ▼ ▼

★ Ben Hecht is film producing again, having acquired the wherewithal and launched a unit in the East.

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